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DETECTIVE STORIES

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

DEC. 15, 1923

NO. 146

Feature Detective Story

The Argentine — Ruby —

by BEULAH POYNTER and SHIRLEY POYNTER

SPECIAL ADDED FEATURE

A New Serial

'Decoy Ducks'

by GEORGE BRONSON HOWARD

ARTHUR G. HADLEY

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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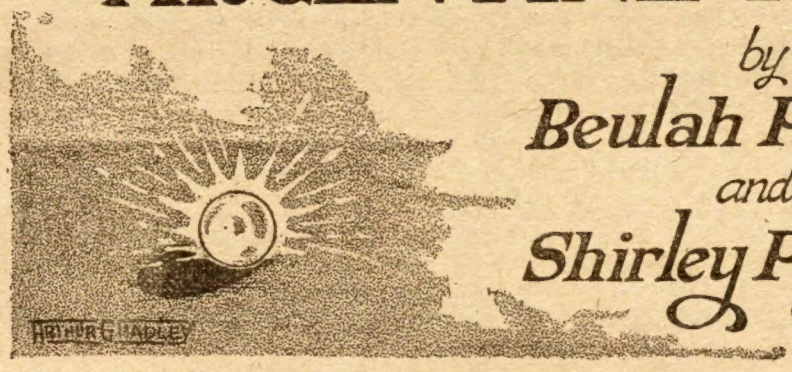
THE EDITOR.

The ARGENTINE RUBY



by
Beulah Poynter
and
Shirley Poynter

CHAPTER ONE

AS the automobile swung to the right at the bend of the road, the headlights outlining pools of black shining water and the heavy dripping foliage of the dark, shadowy trees on either side, Merton Ramsey whistled under his breath and gave the engine more gas preparatory for the upward grade.

As far as he could see through the steady downpour of a late autumn rainstorm, everything was black, without a single flicker of a friendly lamp. Not a structure of any kind was discernible.

It was past midnight, and Ramsey had driven steadily for almost an hour. He was cold in his leather motor coat. The road was treacherous, and the telephone call which had taken him from his comfortable quarters a mysterious one. He felt inclined to turn around and speed back to the city; but, tempted by curiosity as well as a desire to perform his duty, he continued on his way, whistling to bolster up his lagging spirits.

After fifteen minutes by the little clock at his feet, near the accelerator, he spied the illusive glimmer of a distant light, beckoning him through the high, encircling hedge and scrubby pine trees of what seemed an immense estate set on the top of a rocky hill.

He drove slowly now, looking for a gate as some means of egress. Finally he came to an opening in the hedge fence, and discovered a pebble-strewn driveway which led to a dark brick structure some hundred feet back from the road. The light inside shone from a window opening onto a wide-pillared veranda on the first floor.

"Must be the place," he muttered; "if it isn't—good-night!"

As he brought his car to a standstill a large oaken door opened, revealing the interior of a high-paneled hallway illuminated by a single hanging lamp, enclosed in a rose-frosted globe. An ancient crone, her bent, bony shoulders wrapped in a gray woolen shawl, motioned to him to enter. She smiled toothlessly at him, her small black eyes, set in a network of criss-cross wrinkles, crinkled to mere slits behind the steel-rimmed glasses she wore.

He drove his car under an awning of heavy grape arbor, shut off the gas and followed her into the house, a massive three-story building.

"The master's in the library," she mumbled. "He's expectin' you and asked that I fetch you to him."

She knocked on a door to her left, and at the response, "Come in," she opened it and allowed Ramsey to precede her.

"The young man, Mr. Stoner," she said and, stepping back into the hallway, closed the door after the visitor.

The room Ramsey entered was practically in darkness. Only the blazing logs in a large open fireplace gave forth any light, but the young detective could discern a hunched-up figure in an armchair seated before the fire.

"There's a switch there by the door," said his host in a tired, infinitely weary voice. "You can turn on the lights; I'm fond of the semi-darkness myself; that is why they are off."

Ramsey turned the switch and stepped farther into the room, a long, high-ceilinged chamber, with French windows opening onto the balcony and massive oak bookshelves lining two walls.

"I must apologize for asking you to come out here on such a night," Stoner continued in a singularly mellow voice, "and for greeting you in this manner, but for the past month it has been impossible for me either to go to my office or to work at all; a severe case of rheumatism has practically confined me to my bed."

Ramsey noticed that one limb was swathed in bandages from ankle to thigh and was resting on a chair before him. The banker's tall, gaunt figure was huddled in a heavy satin dressing-gown, in color so dark a purple as to appear black in the shadows. Under a skullcap a fringe of white hair escaped, giving him a patriarchal appearance, but his smile was genial and there was a friendly twinkle in the keen blue eyes which rested upon the young man's face and gave to the latter an assurance which he hadn't felt since starting out upon his mission.

"It's quite all right," Ramsey replied, removing his motor coat and cap and advancing toward his host.

"There are cigarettes and cigars in the humidor," the old man continued, "and I fancy my housekeeper, Mrs. Means, could manage a brandy and soda if you cared for one."

"No, thanks, I don't drink," Ramsey answered, "though I'll have a cigarette."

"There are some special ones I had prepared when I was last in Cairo," Stoner said; "they have backheesh in them, if you care for it."

"Thanks, no; good old Virginia is my speed." Ramsey chose a cigarette to his fancy and, lighting it, crossed to the fireplace by the old gentleman's chair. He gave a quick, appraising glance to his surroundings, then casually seated himself.

"Well, Mr. Stoner?"

His host coughed and moved his bandaged limb a trifle, his thin lips twitching with pain as he did so. "Your real name is Ramsey?" he queried.

"Yes, Merton Ramsey. Chief Donovan informed you?"

"Yes. He said you were his most valued operative."

"That's flattering. He didn't tell me anything." Ramsey's brown eyes squinted inquisitively.

"Because I told him nothing, other than that I wanted a detective with me to-night, a brave man and a trustworthy one. You have a gun, Mr. Ramsey?"

"Surely." Ramsey touched his pocket with a grim smile which merely curled his lips, but did not reach his eyes.

"And are not afraid to use it?"

"If occasion demands."

"I trust that it won't, but one can never tell. Well, Mr. Ramsey, here is the reason I have brought you out here to-night. I am, as you are aware, a banker, but a good many times in my long and varied career I have negotiated loans on my own account upon securities, we will say, that I did not think advisable to use the money intrusted to me by others, prefering to advance my own; to-night is to be the occasion of one of these private loans."

"To-night!" Ramsey's tone expressed the surprise he felt.

"The hour is unusual, I'll admit, and because of that, and also because of the nature of the security I am to receive, I have sent for you to be present."

"And what is this security, may I ask?"

"A pigeon-blood ruby valued at nearly one-half million dollars!"

Ramsey gave an involuntary ejaculation.

Stoner chuckled. "And on it I am to lend fifty thousand dollars. Naturally I do not care to have in my possession unprotected so valuable a jewel, and as it is impossible to get it into my deposit vaults before to-morrow, I have called upon you to stay with me to-night and to see that it reaches New York safely in the morning."

"But why must the exchange take place to-night?"

"This morning," Stoner replied slowly, "a man named Juan Ramirez, an Argentine millionaire, came to my bank, which you know is situated on lower Broadway, and inquired for me. Upon being informed that I was confined to my home with illness, he made known to the vice-president his desire to obtain money upon the ruby, an immediate necessity, he insisted, as he was compelled to return to-morrow to Buenos Ayres, his native city. His boat is to sail at eight o'clock. Calvin, the vice-president, did not wish to lend the money in my absence, but telephoned me. I offered to do so myself, providing the jewel was worth all its owner claimed for it. I told Calvin to go with the Argentinian to Cartier or Tiffany and have it appraised and to get in touch with me at once. This he did. The Argentinian, being tied up at a directors' dinner, could not get up here until after midnight, and notified me to this effect, so as soon as I ascertained when he was to arrive I telephoned your chief to send some one to my home to be present during the consummation of the exchange. You are here; now I am awaiting Senor Ramirez's arrival."

"But," said Ramsey slowly, "how do you expect to pay Senor Ramirez?"

"By check; I have some certified blanks with me."

Ramsey rose and, crossing to the long, full windows, stared into the dripping night.

"I shouldn't care to drive along these roads alone with a gem worth half a million," he ventured.

"The Argentinian comes well protected. He has a bodyguard," returned the banker.

There was silence for a few minutes—silence only broken by the fall and crackling of the blazing logs and the drip of the water on the veranda outside. Ramsey strolled the length of the oak-paneled room, his slim, tall figure casting elongated shadows on the brown-tinted walls. Once he hesitated before a row of book shelves and cast a cursory glance over some volumes of history. He felt his host's keen blue eyes watching his movements. Finally he said, abruptly: "I left my car outside; I think I'll put it in your garage if you'll tell me where it is or have some one show me."

"I'll have my man attend to it," Stoner answered; "again I must beg your indulgence for my negligence." He pressed a bell which rested on a small taboret at his elbow. "Do you play chess or pinochle? One or the other might serve to pass away the time while we are waiting."

Ramsey smiled. "I'm hopelessly ignorant of both, but I see you've many interesting books here."

"Yes. Books are my hobby. I've some rare copies I collected on my travels."

The door leading into the hallway opened and a girl stepped into the room, a surprisingly pretty girl with a halo of fluffy yellow hair about a delicately oval face—a girl whose features strongly resembled those of the banker.

"My daughter, Margerie," Mr. Stoner said quietly. "Margerie, this is Mr. Ramsey, the detective I sent for."

She acknowledged the introduction with a little smile and asked:

"What is it, daddy?"

"I rang for Mrs. Means!"

"I know, dear, but she is in bed."

"Which you should be. But if you will tell Carson to put Mr. Ramsey's car in the garage I will be grateful."

"Yes, daddy. How long are you going to stay up?"

"I've business to attend to to-night, dear, so run along and get your beauty sleep."

The girl smiled at the young detective.

"Daddy is like a small boy; he hates to go to bed until he can't keep his eyes open another minute. Has Mr. Ramsey been shown his room, daddy?"

"He is going to sleep in the library, Margerie."

"Oh, father!" the girl remonstrated.

"I shall be quite comfortable!" Ramsey hastened to say, his eyes strolling toward the heavy-cushioned velvet divan near a large steel safe beside double doors in a far corner of the room.

"I am here on businss, Miss Stoner, not as a guest."

"Yes, I know, but"—she hesitated—"I'll see you in the morning, I trust." She added: "I hope you sleep well. I'll see that your car is taken care of."

"Did you bring a bag?" inquired his host.

"No. I wasn't aware I was to spend the night."

"Then, Margerie," turning to his daughter, "have Carson lay out some linen and a robe for Mr. Ramsey, and—good-night, my dear."

She kissed her father lightly on the fringe of his white hair and withdrew. Scarcely had the door closed behind her than the buzz of a motor was heard as it approached on the pebbled driveway.

"My client," said the banker with a grim laugh. "Will you be kind enough to admit him, Ramsey?"

CHAPTER TWO

A SLIM, slightly stooped man in a great bear-skin coat stepped out of the machine and mounted the stairs; he was followed by two other men—one as swarthy-skinned and black-haired as himself; the other was fair and slightly florid.

The first man, evidently Senor Ramirez, looked a trifle startled upon seeing Ramsey, until the latter informed him that Mr. Stoner was within.

"I thought he could not be a man so young," murmured the Argentinian with a strongly marked Spanish accent. "Monentito, I fancy what you say; I make ze mistake as to ze house. You are——"

"His secretary," Ramsey lied glibly.

"My secretaire also, Senor Alvarez"—the South American nodded toward the dark-skinned man who accompanied him—"and Meester O'Brien, ze detective who is wif me to see zat nothing 'appens to me." He smiled, exposing very white teeth under an inky-black mustache.

"Howdy," said O'Brien, extending a heavily gloved hand.

"Buenos — or — gooda-evening, senor," murmured Alvarez, stumbling over his English.

"El rubio tiene?" asked the Argentinian quickly of the smaller man.

"Si lo tengo," he replied rapidly.

Ramsey led the three men into the library, where the banker with great difficulty rose to his feet to greet them. With Old World courtesy the two Spaniards bowed profusely, but refused to remove their greatcoats, while the Irishman smiled condescendingly over what he termed to Ramsey as that "palaver."

"Ze hora ees tarde," apologized Senor Ramirez; "I 'ave mucha business before manana—to—attend—before ze *vapora,* as you say ze sheep, she sail; I spik vera leetle English; I understand 'eem, but——" He waved his long brown hands rather hopelessly.

"You wish to transact your business with me at once and leave. Is that what you mean?" Stoner asked.

"Si! Si! Perdone ze 'urry. Comprehende?"

"Surely. You have the stone with you?"

"Si, si." He motioned to Alvarez, who, stepping nearer to the banker, opened with a key a small black satchel he carried. From it he drew a brown felt bag tied with a draw-string. As he loosened this O'Brien and Ramsey stepped beside him, forming a semicircle, but the owner of the contents of the brown bag, leaning nonchalantly beside the mantelpiece, lighted a cigarette and blew fumes of strong but pungent smoke in rings about his sleek head, while he smiled at the little group, his sloe eyes mere slits of amused concentration.

Despite himself, Ramsey felt a little shiver of excitement as the great glowing crystal of blood-red tumbled out of its resting-place and onto the polished top of the mahogany taboret.

"By George, it is a beauty," he exclaimed involuntarily.

"You've said it," chuckled O'Brien. The banker merely reached out a white, trembling hand, and taking the jewel laid it in the palm of his other hand. He stared intently at it, running his tongue over parched lips.

"It appears to be flawless," he murmured at last.

"Eet ees," said Ramirez, speaking for the first time since the stone was exposed. "Your Senor Teefany, he says mos' wonderful 'e 'ave ever seen, zat eets cut is perfect, ees color marvelous, and zat 'e 'ave never seen so large a ruby before."

"It's magnificent," murmured Ramsey, feeling a sudden desire to touch the glowing thing whose facets scintillated wickedly at him. He drew a deep breath and laughed nervously.

"I should think you'd hate to let it out of your possession," he said, turning to the South American.

"Senor Ramirez smiled. "I no can help. I 'ave need of money now at once, and zis ees all I 'ave to offer. Comprehende? Not for long will I be wizout eet. No—four months—only—maybe less? *Si?*"

The banker, who had been regarding the ruby in silence, suddenly glanced upward toward his detective. "Ramsey, on the top of those book shelves you'll find a magnifying-glass such as jewelers use and a pair of scales. Will you bring them to me?"

"Certainly."

"And light those chandeliers, please. I'm not doubting Tiffany's word, nor Senor Ramirez's, but I am something of an expert myself, and I wish to examine this a little closer. I have another hobby, Ramsey; that is precious stones; I have quite a collection in town which my daughter will inherit."

After some time spent in further scrutiny of the jewel the banker turned to his callers. "Fifty thousand, you said?"

"Si."

"Very well; I will give you my check for that amount."

"But, senor," remonstrated the South American, "how can I cash eet before I leave? My sheep sail at nine by ze clock; can you not give me ze money?"

"Surely you don't imagine I have that much cash out here with me!" exclaimed Stoner. "However, I have arranged for that emergency. My paying teller will admit you at 8 a. m. and take care of you before you leave."

"Muy bien," murmured the other.

"Ramsey, my checkbook, in that drawer there, the drawer to your right."

Ramsey brought him the desired article, and he made out the check for fifty thousand dollars, handed it to Senor Ramirez, who again bowed deeply; then the banker replaced the jewel in the little brown bag, and with "adios" the callers departed.

After the machine turned out of the driveway and the buz of the motor ceased to be heard the banker asked the young detective to assist him to his feet.

"I must put this away," he said, "and no one knows of the combination to the safe but myself."

Painfully he hobbled across the room and, groaning, he knelt and unlocked the safe, placed the jewel within its depths, closing the door; then when he arose he rang the bell.

This time a man as ancient and decrepit-looking as the old housekeeper appeared.

"Carson," said the banker, "make Mr. Ramsey comfortable on the lounge beside the vault and help me to bed. Be sure you bolt all the windows and doors for the night. See you in the morning, Ramsey, and pleasant dreams."

CHAPTER THREE

AFTER the old servant had spread linen and blankets upon the divan, fixed the fire for the night, and placed a robe and pajamas at his disposal, Ramsey undressed and turned in.

The steady drip, drip of the rain, the sputtering of the embers in the open fireplace, and the warmth of his bed made him particularly drowsy, and after a few moments of thought upon the strange bargain

he had just witnessed the young detective dropped into a dreamless, heavy sleep.

Above in the rooms over his head for a short time sounds of footsteps could be heard; then they ceased, and over the house settled a deathlike silence.

A clock somewhere in the building struck the hour—two a. m. The young man stirred, sleepily adjusted his pillow and drew the covering up about his shoulders; the room was becoming cold; a faint noise, as of some one fumbling at the lock at the window opening onto the balcony, half-awakened him; then, as the sound was not repeated, imagining it but a dream, he slept again. Some moments later, when his heavy breathing informed the intruders that his slumber was deathlike, the window opened and a man stepped cautiously inside, a swarthy-visaged individual, wrapped in a greatcoat, whose collar reached to his upper heavily mustached lip; an automobile cap pulled far down over his eyes hid practically his entire face, but when he reached the centre of the thick-carpeted floor and stood silhouetted in the firelight and Ramsey opened his wondering eyes, the latter immediately recognized him as the banker's caller of the evening—Senor Ramirez.

Before the detective could utter a cry a second man, who had stealthily followed the Argentinian, was upon him and a handkerchief saturated in chloroform was clamped over his nostrils, while Ramirez bound his arms behind him.

In a haze, struggling against a vanishing consciousness, Ramsey saw the red-faced, man, O'Brien, the third member of the trio, cross noiselessly to the safe and, kneeling before it, manipulate the lock until the door swung open. Then oblivion settled upon the young man, and in a swimming pool of blackness the scene before him was completely blotted out.

The sunlight was pouring through the stained, paneled glass of the French windows when he again awoke; a thumping, sick headache and shooting pains torturing his hands and arms and legs roused him to an immediate knowledge of his suroundings and to what had occurred. A handkerchief was tied tightly over his mouth, and try as he could to remove it or shift his position he could not. For what seemed centuries to him he lay there staring at the windows and straining his ears for sounds of activity within the house.

He had no idea of the hour, but concluded that the morning was well advanced; if so, Ramirez had already cashed Stoner's check and was now on his way to South America; that is, if he had any intention of going there. Ramsey groaned at his futility and struggled against his bonds.

After some little time he heard footsteps outside the library door, then a timid knock. When he did not answer the knock was repeated twice, then the door was pushed ajar, and from without came the cracked treble of the old housekeeper:

"Are you awake, sir?"

Through the handkerchief Ramsey tried to move his lips, but no sound came.

"My, what a long sleeper the lad is," murmured the old woman; then Ramsey heard a second voice, young, vibrant with life, that of Margerie Stoner:

"It's nine o'clock, Mrs. Means; I think we'd better awaken him." She raised her tones. "Mr. Ramsey! Mr. Ramsey, aren't you ready for some breakfast?"

"I wonder why he doesn't answer. Oh, dear, I do hope nothing has happened to him."

"I'll go in," said the old woman. As she stepped across the threshold of the library she gave a startled cry, which immediately brought the girl to her side.

"Heaven save us," wailed the old woman, terror-stricken and trembling over what she saw; "is the poor boy dead?"

"No, no; here, help me untie him," commanded the girl, taking in the situation at a glance. The old woman brought her a pair of scissors from a near-by table, and a few seconds later Ramsey, released from his bonds, sat up and briefly explained what had happened.

"And the ruby is gone?" gasped the girl.

"I am afraid so," he said dolefully; "the last thing I remember was the safe door swinging open."

"It's open now, yes, and the jewel is

gone," she exclaimed, giving a hasty glance to the vault's interior.

"Have your father get in touch with his bank and see if the check has been cashed," said Ramsey. "I'll telephone my office to look out for the three men and ascertain if they have sailed or not."

Stoner's consternation over his loss was almost pathetic, and when he learned that early that morning, as was arranged, the Argentinian had presented his check and obtained the fifty thousand upon it he collapsed utterly.

After a hasty cup of coffee Ramsey, dressed, jumped in his car and hastened over to the Hoboken docks to learn what news he could about the passenger list sailing for the Argentine. To his surprise the huge *Vesta* was still in port. When he stated his mission to the purser he was allowed to step onto the vessel and examine her from deck to hold. He found that Senor Juan Ramirez had booked passage, together with his valet, but that neither man had arrived.

Shortly after twelve the ship sailed without the South Americans.

CHAPTER FOUR

TWELVE hours later a very dejected, crestfallen young man sat in the inner office of his chief, Terry Donovan, head of the private detective agency of Donovan & McLaren.

Upon Donovan's usually good-natured benign countenance was a most unpleasant scowl, which did not tend to heighten Ramsey's mercurial spirits. He sucked viciously upon an unlighted pipe, while the stub fingers of his large right hand beat a nervous tattoo on the roll-top desk before which he sat.

"What I can't figure is why the h—— you went to sleep," he grumbled, "with a sum like that at stake. I would have thought you'd kept both ears and eyes open."

"But, Chief," protested the young operator, "things looked absolutely on the level, and Stoner had investigated the man and his credentials. How was I to guess that he was a crook."

"He isn't," snapped Donovan.

"Not a crook?"

"No."

"How do you figure that? He borrowed a sum of money, leaving the ruby as security with Stoner, then broke open his safe and stole the stone."

"You don't think Ramirez committed the robbery, do you?"

"I certainly do."

"Well, he didn't."

"But, Donovan, you forget I saw the man, saw him as plainly as I see you, and the two other birds who accompanied him."

"Well and good, but I've had the wireless busy since this occurred, and everywhere have received the same reports that Juan Ramirez is a man of unquestionable integrity, a prominent member of Buenos Ayres society, belonging to the best clubs, a ranch owner—*estanciero,* I think they call them—and a man of very considerable fortune; certainly not a person to stoop to larceny. No, the man who robbed Banker Stoner was not Juan Ramirez."

"Then the person who left the jewel with him was not Ramirez, either," said Ramsey with finality, "for they were certainly one and the same."

Donovan nodded. "I think you are right there," he said.

"But in that case how did Ramirez's impersonator get possession of the jewel and learn of the plan of its disposal?"

"That's for us to find out."

Ramsey's brows met over the bridge of his nose. He rose abruptly and paced the length of the office, kicking aside viciously a cuspidor which stood in his way.

"The question is," he ruminated, "whether Ramirez was ever in touch with the bank, or owned the jewel, or whether it was a clever impersonation from start to finish. Has he been in this country at all?"

"He is here now," replied Donovan, "and undoubtedly he was the man who negotiated the loan in the first place. The vice-president of the National is no boob; Ramirez was the man who went with him to Tiffany's to have the jewel appraised; he

was the man who booked passage on the *Vesta* for the Argentine, but Ramirez was not the man who turned the ruby over to Stoner, nor was he the man who in turn robbed Stoner, nor to whom the paying teller handed out the fifty thousand dollars."

"Then it's up to us to find Ramirez," muttered Ramsey.

"And his impersonator," added his chief.

CHAPTER FIVE

IN a most uncertain frame of mind, Ramsey plunged into the uptown subway. He hadn't the faintest idea where he was going nor which way to turn. Upon a card which Donovan had given him was engraved the Argentine millionaire's name and address—an elaborate affair, with Avenida Alvear 21 in one corner, Jockey Club-Calle Florida in the other, and sprawled across it in blue ink, "Hotel Plaza, N. Y."

"It's a cinch he isn't there now," said Ramsey, studying it. "I'm not at all certain that I agree with Donovan in his deductions, anyway. Ramirez may be all right in his own country and a crook in this one, or the man calling himself Ramirez may have been the chap who fooled the bank in the first place; but I'll trot over to the Plaza anyway and see what I can learn there."

At Fifty-ninth street he left the subway and, walking into the hotel lobby, strolled over to the information desk. His inquiries elicited the information that Juan Ramirez was registered there and, contrary to expectations, had not checked out, though he had informed the clerk in charge he intended to return to his native country on the day previous.

"Is he upstairs now?" Ramsey asked as casually as he could. "If so I'd like to speak to him."

No, the senor was not in his apartment, and upon further questioning, the detective learned he had not called for his key nor slept in his room the night before.

"He's not a dead-beat, either," said Ramsey's informant; "I'd stake my oath on that, for his week was up day before yesterday, and he settled in full. If he doesn't show up in another twenty-four hours I'm going to get in touch with the police. I've an idea something has happened to him." Ramsey thanked the clerk and walked out of the hotel.

He crossed Fifth avenue and turned south on Madison, a baffled expression on his good-natured face. "Thunder," he muttered, "I'm in a blind alley!" Before a tea shop, its doorway a few steps below the street, he paused. An appetizing odor of fresh coffee and broiled chops greeted his nostrils. Suddenly realizing he was hungry, he pushed open the vividly painted door and entered the little restaurant. Window-boxes painted the same shade of blue, filled with artificial pansies, were set in the window-seats. Blue tables with orange-colored covers embroidered in purple were placed under gay candlesticks, and several diners, grouped about them, glanced toward the young man's direction as he entered.

To his surprise he noticed, sitting alone with a pot of tea before her and the guttering gleam of a candle turning to molten gold the pale yellow of her hair, Margerie Stoner. For a second he hesitated to speak; then when the girl's violet eyes met his with a gleam of recognition, he stepped toward her.

"Miss Stoner," he exclaimed.

"It's Mr. Ramsey, isn't it?" she murmured, extending her hand and half indicating that he occupy the vacant seat on her right.

"Yes. How is your father?"

"In a furious temper at you, the bank, the thieves and, most of all, at himself. I came into town to get away from his vituperations."

She laughed.

"I take it he's feeling better, then."

"Much! Poor daddy, it really was a tremendous loss. Have you learned anything at all?"

Ramsey explained all he knew, and the girl sighed. They were seated near the window, and in the gathering twilight the street lights flickered and made clearly visible all passersby. Suddenly Ramsey stiffened and

leaned forward. A man, tall, swarthy, black-mustached, but coatless, lurched drunkenly past the tea room.

Ramsey snatched his hat from the chair beside him and turned to the bewildered girl.

"Ramirez!" he exclaimed. "If I'm not back in twenty minutes settle my check for me and I'll pay you later." Then he dashed out of the door.

Just ahead of him was the person who had occasioned his precipitate departure. The man he took for Ramirez swayed uncertainly, twice he collided with pedestrians and was greeted both with laughter and curses.

"Drunk as a sailor," muttered Ramsey, running to overtake him. At that instant he saw some one else was trying to reach the man before he came to any harm—a woman with a shawl thrown about her gaunt shoulders, with inky-black hair parted in the centre and twisted into a hard knot at the nape of her neck, a neck as brown and leathery in appearance as the South American's.

Just as the detective reached the man the woman came along on the other side, panting from her exertion of running. She glared at Ramsey from under jet-black brows and linked her arm through that of the Argentinian.

"Come on, Pedro; you're drunk and shouldn't be on the street."

The man she addressed as Pedro stared at her uncomprehendingly, his eyes filmy and clouded, but he turned submissively.

"Just a minute," said Ramsey; "what's this man's name?"

"What's it to you?" snapped the woman. There was a guttural tone in her voice, though she spoke without an accent. A certain negroid cast to her features informed Ramsey that the tar brush had not passed her by.

"A great deal," he retorted; "come on."

"My name is——" The dark man mumbled in a thick, muffled voice, but before the words were scarcely out of his mouth the woman interrupted.

"His name is Pedro Gonzalvez. He's my man, and he's drunk. Come on, you——" she ordered to the man.

"Just a minute. Ramirez!" interrupted Ramsey.

A gleam of intelligence shot through the bleary eyes; he tried to draw away from the woman's restraining hand.

"Si," he muttered, *"es mi nombre."*

Though feature for feature Ramirez and the man who had duped Stoner were identical, yet something about the former, in spite of his apparent intoxication, a certain degree of refinement the pseudo millionaire had not possessed, made the detective positive that the man before him was the real Ramirez and not the impersonator.

"You'll both come with me," he said abruptly to the woman, placing his hand on her arm.

"What do you mean, we'll come with you?" she bantered, squinting her hard black eyes.

"You're under arrest."

"Arrest! What for? Pedro's drunk, but he ain't disorderly; neither am I." A white line settled about her thin lips, but otherwise she gave no evidence of being afraid.

"Never mind. Come on."

A little crowd had gathered about them, amongst them a bluecoat, to whom Ramsey explained the situation in brief.

"Him an Argentine millionaire?" shrilled the woman, sputtering out the words venomously. "Him? He's Pedro Gonzalvez, I tell you, and he's from Trinidad, not from South America; say, you can't take us with you!"

"Is that so?" exclaimed the policeman. "If you've nothing to fear you won't raise a howl about coming; if you have"—he laughed ominously—"what's your name?" he added, turning to the dazed Spaniard.

"I told you," said the woman.

"You keep still."

"Nombre!" commanded Ramsey. "Yours?"

The man ran a slim brown hand over his thick black hair, then smiled. *"Si, si, mi nombre*—Ramirez."

"He lies," cried the woman.

Ramsey hailed a taxicab, and together with the policeman took them down to po-

lice headquarters. On the way he decided definitely that the swarthy Argentinian was not intoxicated, but drugged. The woman maintained a dogged silence.

CHAPTER SIX

THE door opened and Inspector Clancy, a heavy-jowled, red-faced man in his early fifties, stepped inside, casting an inquiring glance at his visitors—a crouching, sullen-faced woman with tightly twisted black hair, a swarthy-faced, dazed individual with a black mustache, next the ruddy young patrolman, and a stalwart, rather handsome lad in a motor coat and cap, whose brown eyes shone with intelligence.

"Well, Ramsey," he said, addressing the latter, "what's up?"

"Hello, inspector; I took it upon myself to bring this woman down to you, though I'm not certain she's other than she claims to be; but the man is Senor Ramirez, unless I'm mistaken, and the very man Donovan and I have been trying to locate for the last twenty-four hours."

"What's he done?"

Ramsey briefly outlined what had transpired. The officer's keen blue eyes had an incredulous expression as they rested first on the stupidly inane countenance of the Argentinian and then upon the woman.

"May I telephone Donovan from here?" concluded the detective.

"Sure, there's the phone on my desk."

"Ramsey took down the receiver and asked for his number; when he got Donovan on the wire he said:

"Say, Donovan, I'm down at Clancy's office, and I think I've got the genuine Ramirez with me. He appears to have been drugged; anyway I cannot get him out of a semi-stupor and hope maybe you can, if you beat it down here. Yeh, hop in a cab. I've detained a woman who claims to be his wife and says her name is Gonzalvez. All right, we'll question her. Good-by!"

Ramsey clicked the receiver and seated himself before the desk to wait for his chief.

The man he was certain was Ramirez had slumped forward in the chair, his eyes closed and his hands hanging limply by his side. A grayish pallor had settled over his muddy skin.

"He's been doped all right," said Clancy; "here, Mac, you go around to the corner lunch-room and get a pot of strong black coffee. If that doesn't fetch him we'll send for Doc Travers."

Mac, the young patrolman, hastened to do as he was bid.

"Now," said Clancy, turning to the woman, "what's your name?"

"Gonzalvez," she replied. "Mrs. Pedro Gonzalvez."

"And his?" motioning to the inert figure.

"Pedro Gonzalvez. He's my husband."

"Who doped him?"

"He ain't doped, he's drunk," she muttered.

"Where do you live?"

"At No.— Lexington avenue."

"Hem!" Clancy stroked the gray stubble of beard on his chin. Before he could question her further Donovan arrived. Again Ramsey repeated what had occurred, and Donovan questioned the woman, who reiterated her statement. He crossed over to the Argentinian and shook his shoulder.

"What's your name?" he demanded.

The South American opened his heavy-lidded eyes and stared at him.

"Que? No comprende," he said thickly.

"Nombre," interposed Ramsey.

A faint light broke over the Argentinian's face.

"Ramirez," he replied. "Juan Ramirez."

"He's lying," the woman broke in.

"Keep out of this!" snapped the detective.

"Where do you live?" he continued to the Argentinian. But the man's head drooped again, and he did not reply.

"He can't tell us anything," said Donovan; "we'll have to make the woman talk."

"I haven't done anything!" she exclaimed. "What are you holding me for? You've no right to arrest me!"

"You come across with your real name and how this man came to be in this condition, or I'll make it pretty hot for you," Donovan said significantly.

She turned pale, but clung with the

tenacity of a leech to her statement. But when Donovan looked up the telephone number of the house she gave as her address, and called it to see if she resided there, she fidgeted nervously and seemed on the verge of breaking down.

While he was at the telephone the patrolman returned with a pot of steaming coffee. Ramsey thanked him and, pouring out a cup, handed it to Ramirez.

"Drink," he said. "Café!"

"Si, senor. Gracious." He seemed to enjoy the beverage, which acted as a stimulant, and in a few minutes straightened a little, the mist befogging his brain apparently lifting somewhat. He looked almost inquiringly, as if for the first time realizing his surroundings. There was no recognition in his eyes when they rested on the woman, and in faltering English he asked where he was and how he came to be there.

"My secretaire, Alvarez—where is he?" he asked when Ramsey explained how he had found him upon the street.

"I wish I could tell you," replied the detective; "we're hoping you can give us some information; this woman claims you are her husband."

"No, no!" interrupted the Argentinian; "no—nevaire 'ave I seen her before. I cannot understand eet—my secretaire gone, my boat—I should by now be on my way to Buenos Ayres, and my rubio—eet—eet is gone!" sudden comprehension of his loss filling him with dismay.

"Suppose you tell us as nearly as you can remember what happened to you from the time you left the Plaza Hotel until now."

Ramirez hesitated, then with carefully chosen words began:

"Senors, I own a beeg rubio—worth, what you say, one-'alf million dollars. On him I make ze arrangements to borrow feefty thousand from ze banker, Senor Stoner. I am compelled by business to stay in ze city until twenty-four of the clock, zen wiz a detective, Senor O'Brien, whom my secretiare, Senor Alvarez, 'ave secure for me, and my secretaire we take a taxi to motor out to Senor ze banker's 'ome, far upon ze Hudson.

"Eet is ver' dark and rainy, but I 'ave no fear, as I 'ave a bodyguard wiz me who 'ave a gun—and my trusted secretaire. We drive ver' fast up your so beautiful Riverside road, and I am content, for wiz ze money which I am to receive as a lend on my jewel I am going in ze morning to my own ceety to marriage ze girl I lofe.

"We drive for an hour, maybe more, when we come to a place where ze river turns; eet is all dark, black as ze night. All of a sudden a car shoot out from under some thick trees, somebody cries 'Stop!' our taxi come to a standstill, zen a man in a mask spring from ze car and jump upon our running-board; he have a pistol in his hand. Alvarez cry out and try to draw 'is gun, but ze masked man spring at me. He hold something over my face. I struggle; zen I know nozing more."

"And Alvarez was in on this," commented Donovan dryly.

"No, no; he ees my secretaire; he is honest. I am of that sure!" protested the Argentinian.

"And you couldn't tell what this man looked like?"

"No; 'e was tall, thin—like me; zat is all I know. Zen when I wake up I am in ze leetle room wiz zat woman," indicating Mrs. Gonzalvez. "She say I am drunk and keep me in ze house, but when she no look I run away. Zen zis man," turning to Ramsey, "bring me here. My rubio, she is gone; my secretaire is gone. Where zay take heem I do not know," he concluded, sighing wearily.

"Well, what have you got to say now?" Donovan shot at the woman. "Come on, or I'll give you a trip up the river."

"Well, I'll tell you everything I know about this matter," she admitted dully. "My name is Mrs. Alvarez. Yes"—she said at Donovan's start of surprise—"I am his secretary's wife. My husband and I didn't get along very well and I left him. Last night he came to me with Senor Ramirez and asked me to take care of him. He said he was a well-known figure in South America and that he would be disgraced if he were seen in his drunken condition. I took Ramirez in and cared for him. I don't know nothing else."

"Where do you live?"

"Lexington avenue and Fifty-eighth street, just as I told you."

"So you don't reside with your husband, then. How do you make a living?"

"I'm a seamstress."

"Ramsey, have Mac take Ramirez back to the Plaza Hotel and get him into bed; the man looks as though he needs medical attention," Donovan ordered.

Ramsey called a cab and hustled Ramirez into it, giving Mac strict instructions to see the South American to the hotel and to call in a doctor. When he returned to the room Donovan motioned the young detective to his side, and in a lowered voice he said:

"I am letting the woman go, Ramsay; we can't pin anything on her, but I want you to keep her shadowed, and don't let her out of your sight for a minute. She'll probably lead us to Alvarez. I think he is at the bottom of the whole business, regardless of what his employer believes."

"Righto! I'll hang on her trail all night if necessary," Ramsey replied. Turning to the woman, Donovan said gruffly:

"You can go now, but watch your step, and no more lies."

Mrs. Alvarez straightened her hair, patting several pins in place, and without answering left the room, ignorant of the fact that Ramsey was close behind her, that he was in the same subway train with her, and watched her as she entered a brown-stone house on Lexington avenue and Fifty-eighth street.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RAMSEY stared for a few moments at the sign in the window, which read, "Senora Pedro Alvarez, plain and fancy sewing," then turned away. As he did so he noticed another card in a window of the apartment, evidently just opposite to the one occupied by Senora Alvarez across the hall. On it were the words, "Furnished Rooms." An intuition which had stood him in good stead during the several months he had been a detective in Donovan's employ impelled him to mount the worn stone steps leading to the front entrance and ring the bell of the door leading to the apartment.

A slatternly looking negress with a dust cap on her head and her bare feet thrust into large bedroom slippers opened the door.

"You rent rooms here?" Ramsey inquired.

"Miss Lane's got the front parlor vacant," she answered grudgingly, "but 'tain't straightened up yit."

"May I see it?"

"Yas, sah. This is it." She opened the door a trifle wider, and he stepped into a large, dingy room which opened onto the hallway. A faded grosgrain rug, spotted and soiled, covered the centre of the floor, a white-painted bed was visible in an alcove.

Ramsey surveyed the place with ill-concealed distaste, but inquired its price.

"I gotta ask Mis' Lane," said the negress; "she doan always say the same tuh everybody. Wait jes' a minute, and I'll call her. Oh, Mis' Lane!"—she raised her voice—"they's a gentleman wants tuh know what you all want for the room."

A woman appeared from another doorway—a large, corpulent, white-haired woman with florid cheeks and watery-blue eyes.

"It's my best suite," she drawled, "and I always ask twelve dollars for it."

"But you'll take less," he said, not wishing to seem too anxious.

"Well, are you alone?"

"Yes."

"In that case I'll take two dollars less."

Ramsey handed her a ten-dollar bill.

"I'll bring my baggage over later," he said.

Mrs. Lane straightened a tidy on the faded plush settee, told Minnie, the colored woman, to bring some towels and fill the water pitcher, and showed evidences of a desire to be loquacious. But Ramsey informed her he wanted to rest for a little while before going out, and finally dismissed both mistress and maid.

As soon as he was certain he was alone he opened the door leading into the hallway, which gave him a good view of the apartment opposite. For the time being at least he intended to keep a close watch on the wife of the Argentinian's secretary.

"Wish I had a newspaper," he muttered, feeling very much like a cat watching a mouse-hole. "I may have a long, tiresome wait for nothing."

For want of something to occupy his mind he picked up a Gideon Bible lying on the marble-topped centre-table and, opening it at St. Mark, idly pursued the finely printed pages.

Suddenly he was alert; a telephone jingled across the hall, and through the paper-like partition came the guttural tones of the woman he was shadowing.

"Yes, it's me; where are yuh, Pedro?"

"Pedro!" Ramsey ejaculated under his breath, stealthily moving to the threshold. Pedro was the given name of her husband.

"At Jimmy Callahan's?" There was suspicion in the woman's voice.

"Whatcha doin' there? Business! Tell that to the marines. Say, I got something to tell yuh, and you better come home or yuh're gonna get into a lot of trouble." Silence, then: "I can't tell yuh over the phone; I gotta see yuh. Why can't yuh come home? Who's with yuh that yuh can't get away? Nobody but Callahan? I don't believe yuh! Now, listen; the cops got holda Ramirez." She paused, then burst forth in a tirade. "Say, what are yuh bawlin' me out for? I only turned my back and he got out in the street. That wasn't my fault; I tried to catch him, but I couldn't, and lemme tell yuh, he wasn't drunk, either; he was drugged! Yeh, that's what they said at headquarters. What are yuh up to, anyway? Givin' me a rafta lies and tellin' me to keep him away from booze or he'd have snakes!"

Ramsey cautiously stepped into the hallway and near to the door leading into the room where the woman was speaking.

She continued: "I'm not a fool! No, I'm not going to spill any beans! But lemme give it to yuh straight; if yuh ain't here by midnight I'm coming up there; get me? Oh, don't I know where Callahan's place is? You just bet I do—280 East 123d street. Now you come home or I'll be there! Understand?"

Ramsey heard the receiver click on the hook and the woman begin a nervous pacing back and forth over the uncarpeted floor. She muttered imprecations under her breath, but the detective could not distinguish what she said. Suddenly she seemed to reach a decision, for her staccato footsteps ceased, and almost before he could dodge into his own quarters her door opened and, hatted and cloaked, she appeared in the doorway.

He snatched up his cap and at a discreet distance followed her east until she climbed the stairs which led to the Third Avenue Elevated; then he motioned to a yellow taxi standing near the curb.

"Drive to 280 East 123d street," he said, "and stop on the other side of the street."

He arrived at his destination before the woman did, but he had only a moment to wait before he saw her go into a dingy five-story apartment building; then he sprang out of the cab, paid his fare, and darted into the lobby.

There was an elevator, and evidently Senora Alvarez had entered it and was on her way to Callahan's apartment.

"Where's Jim Callahan's flat?" Ramsey inquired casually, when the elevator came down.

"Forty-two; but Mistah Callahan say he doan want no visitahs to-day," replied the boy; "that lady what went up might jes' as well 'a' stayed down, 'cause Mistah Callahan ain't gonna let her in."

"Lady? What lady?" Ramsey looked innocent.

"Ah doan know who she is, but she's powerful anxious to see him, 'cause she began ringin' his bell and yellin' tuh him tuh open the door." The colored boy chuckled. "Ah reckon maybe there'll be a fight up there if she does git in, foh they's some party upstairs, yes, sah."

"Party?"

"Yeh, gals and booze! Think maybe the lady is the other man's wife! Oh, Lordie, won't there be hair-pullin' when she sees what's going on!"

Ramsey jingled insinuatingly some coins in his trousers pocket. "Is there a fire-escape leading into Callahan's apartment?" he asked. The negro's white eyeballs rolled. "Reckon so. Why?"

"Maybe I want to see the fun. Could you help me to do so for a dollar?"

"The boy laughed. "Sure could, only Ah doan want to get in Dutch with Mistah Callahan."

"Nor the police?"

"Police?" The negro's jaw dropped. "You ain't a cop, are yuh?"

"Never mind what I am. I want to see the inside of that apartment, and I don't want to be seen myself. It's worth a dollar to you if you show me the way."

A little dubiously the elevator boy led the way into a courtyard, where two fire-escapes reached within a few feet of the ground. He motioned to the one leading to Callahan's flat.

"Four flights up," he said, "but foh the love uv Gawd doan git me into any trouble."

Ramsey pressed the coin into his leathery red palm and, drawing himself up, began to mount the iron stairway. At the third flight he hesitated and became more cautious in his movements. Over his head he saw a white curtain flopping with the wind and realized that a window was open in the apartment above.

He reached this and, kneeling, glanced inside. The room into which he peered was unlighted and empty, but he could see through an open door a ray of light and the shadow of a man moving about; then he heard a persistent ringing of a doorbell, and some one inside the apartment exclaimed angrily:

"Who the devil are you and what do you want?"

Ramsey could not hear the reply, but he knew it was the Alvarez woman seeking admittance. He heard the same voice again speaking:

"Go on home, Elaine. I told you not to come here, and I mean it. You can't come in."

The ringing continued, and under cover of the noise Ramsey raised the window a trifle and stepped over the sill into a poorly furnished bedroom, not more than six feet wide. Carefully he crossed its length until he reached the door, and, hidden by the darkness, he saw the interior of the room beyond.

It was a parlor of a typical Harlem flat, small, decorated with faded pink-flowered wall paper and grass rugs upon the floor. On a mission table in the centre of the room was a pile of banknotes and a little brown bag, which he recognized as the one containing the Argentine ruby.

Grouped about the table were two women, blatant, hard-faced, brassy-haired, in flashy clothing, and three men. One he immediately recognized as the secretary, Alvarez; another, the florid, red-haired O'Brien, and a tall, slim blond man in a gray-and-white checkered suit.

All appeared to be under the influence of liquor, and evidence of liquid refreshment in the shape of glasses, siphons and bottles lay scattered about the table and floor.

Alvarez appeared to be in a raging temper, for the slim man, crossing to him, bade him "keep his trap shut and not raise the roof!"

"Better let her in, Pedro," he advised; "she'll get us in trouble if you don't get this stuff out of the way. Then let her howl her head off about the girls if she likes."

He gathered up the bills and the bag as he spoke and, crossing to a mission desk, flung them inside; then Alvarez opened the door to admit his wife.

Ramsey did not wait to hear the jealous tirade nor witness the inevitable hair-pulling. Darting to the window, he climbed down the fire-escape, and motioning to the elevator boy, who had remained below in the courtyard, wide-eyed and anxious, he ordered him to run to the corner and call a policeman, and while he was gone telephoned headquarters to send some men up to the place immediately.

Then he dashed back into the court, up the fire-escape and into the room where the group, now in a drunken brawl, whirled in amazement at his entrance.

"Hands up!" he roared, his pistol covering them.

The slim man's hand shot to his hip pocket, but on Ramsey's command to hold up his hands he did as he was bidden. Ramsey lined the five up against the wall.

"Now walk over to that desk and hand me

the ruby and the money you have stowed away there."

The man tried to bluff, pretending he did not know what Ramsey meant, but with the muzzle of the revolver pointing at his chest he obeyed.

The Alvarez woman, her hair streaming in a black cascade, her face livid with jealous fury, began to cry hysterically that she had nothing to do with the robbery.

"This is what yuh get for throwing me!" she shrieked. "Yuh low swine!"

The slim man flung the jewel on the centre-table and took his place with the others, his back against the wall.

For one moment Ramsey lowered his gun and reached for the package of bills and the brown bag, but as he did so the tall man's arm shot out, knocking the revolver from his hand. The next instant Alvarez sprang upon Ramsey and brought him to the floor, while one of the women, snatching up the pistol from the rug where it had fallen, gave him a terrific blow over the head.

The room swam, everything became a blurry red, and Ramsey lost consciousness.

CHAPTER EIGHT

"OUT by the fire-escape!" ordered Alvarez, making a dash for the window. The others followed, the slim man in the rear carrying the treasure in his hand.

But when Alvarez reached the window he saw in the courtyard below the policeman the negro had summoned and the colored boy dancing about with excitement as he motioned upwards.

At the first landing four bluecoats appeared—one from the elevator, three upon the stairs.

Escape was impossible. Hedged in upon all sides, they were trapped!

It was Alvarez who explained the ruse by which the banker and Ramirez had been robbed.

Alvarez, it seemed, had been honest enough until the time he had met O'Brien and the slim individual, whom he called Skinny, both confidence men.

With more time than money on his hands, he had been beguiled into poker games by the former, then into shady transactions, which made him their tool. Inadvertently he had made known the fact of the existence of the ruby to O'Brien, who together with Skinny had planned a way to relieve the Argentinian of it.

As the jewel was safely hidden in a bank's vault, which bank not even the secretary knew, it was impossible to steal it. But Ramirez's immediate necessity for money, the negotiations of the loan, and Alvarez's part in the deal laid open a way to the thieves. Skinny, not unlike the Argentinian in build, and somewhat of a linguist, found it easy to disguise himself as Ramirez, O'Brien became the detective engaged by Alvarez to protect the ruby, and Skinny held up the taxi, chloroformed the Argentinian, and later impersonated him at the banker's home.

The two women, one of whom Alvarez loved, by name Daisy Fields, took the stupefied man to her home and kept him overnight, but later, becoming afraid that her house was being watched, she asked Alvarez to remove him. This he and O'Brien did, placing him in Senora Alvarez's care, after they had given him enough hypodermics of morphine to deaden his sensibilities.

Both Stoner and Juan Ramirez were profuse in their expressions of gratitude toward Merton Ramsey, and the reward he received for his services was more than ample, but it was neither their thanks nor the generous checks he received which caused the flush of excitement on his cheekbones and the added throb to his heart, but a quaintly worded little note from Margerie Stoner, ending with the request that very, very soon she hoped he would again take tea with her at the Blue Painted Inn and then pay both the checks.

"By Jove," he mused, a tender smile wreathing his face. "She's a dandy girl. I wonder——"

And Margerie was wondering also.

The Slaying of "Seldom-Seen"

By NEIL McCONLOGUE

REPORTS differed as to the number of men in the gun fight. It happened that our leg-man, most recent cub on the staff, was in the neighborhood when the story broke. And it might have been because of the fact that this tyro quill-driver had not put his copy over properly that the night city editor roared at me: "See Lew Madden and get the straight of to-night's murder."

The Desk's tone carried more than the usual anxiety. And as I reached for my hat our dramatic critic, Mr. Bicker, called:

"You're wanted on the wire; make it snappy; I want to call the wife."

"H-e-l-l-o," I sang.

"The great melting pot," began the speaker, "boils the fiercest right here in my district——"

"And draws the son of man there to shoot it out," was my retort and interruption when I recognized Madden's voice. Of course I had the Sharkey-Cardillo pistol battle in mind.

"Meaning the shooting of 'Seldom-seen' Sharkey, I suppose," countered Madden.

"Uh-huh," I grunted into the transmitter.

"Well, son," returned the detective's fatherly voice, "you are a trifle muddled, so far as location is concerned."

"But you made the arrest, Lew; naturally I'd take it that the brawl took place in your district. Of course there is no law prohibiting you from riding another sleuth's range," was my second-thought apology.

Lew took a moment to weigh my words, as was his custom on occasion, then snapped into a feature of the business at hand, teaching me a lesson that I had imbibed as a cub reporter, but, like other newspaper men, had forgotten in the excitement of trailing the Sharkey-Cardillo affair.

"You're not supposed to suppose, son! You news sharps are taught never to take anything for granted. Am I wrong in this?" he asked.

"No, you are right," I admitted.

"Then hustle downtown and see me. Who can tell; maybe I might be good for a few 'sticks,' as you reporters say, a few paragraphs of information that would be found to be printable and, at the same time, not place your paper in the maw of a nasty, expensive libel suit."

"Before I hop the subway, and so that I will have something to mull over en route, I want you to answer one question, Lew."

"Let her fly!"

"This fellow Sharkey, as I understand it, and the Italian, who it appears killed him, were the best of friends; am I wrong in this?"

"Not entirely wrong; you have just touched upon one of the many queer twists in this, as yet, unsolved mystery," assured the official. "The underworld have long and often dwelled upon the apparent understanding between the two principals in to-night's shooting party. In fact, from what word has come to me since the shots rang out, Jim Sharkey, Joe Cardillo and a thief-girl, known as 'High-heel' Betty, shared a three-cornered love."

"Even in 'Gutterside,'" I pryed, "the triangle raises its hectic head."

"Not the way you mean. This strange trio seemed to share sort of a brothers-sister palship, but, however, this is only thieves' gossip."

Madden's voice held a something that prompted my "That speaks for itself—enough to send me scampering up to your

office, were there not the prospects of a story that will be garnished with actual murder." I banged the receiver into its place and began my jaunt to the chief of detective's office, in the very heart of the poor belt.

As the subway scooted toward Times Square, a matter of twelve minutes by express trains or twenty via the slower locals, I gave much thought to what I had previously heard about this fellow known as 'Seldom-seen' Sharkey—to this strange crook that the underworld rarely referred to as Jim Sharkey.

"Odd bird, this Sharkey," I thought.

Sharkey, as I had heard, didn't make New York City his place of residence; Gotham was merely sort of a supply station for the man. Instead of the active metropolis, "Seldom-seen" lived in a quiet New Jersey suburb. I saw the place the night that Lew Madden and myself motored back from Philadelphia, where the Chief had been to testify in a famous case.

Sharkey's suburban place was evidently a very old place. It seemed capable of inspiring goose pimples, especially at midnight, as our machine whizzed past, stirring the dust of the New Jersey highway.

There were many windows—long windows, high windows—and each was very narrow and heavily curtained. Those on the first floor footed almost upon a well-groomed lawn that splashed its verdant green against the porch surrounding the entire house. The length of the windows, the steepness of the roof and the massive chimney smoke-stacks spoke of a bygone age.

"In the broad and lofty rooms of that house," Madden then told me; "Jim Sharkey has stored rare editions and perhaps multifarious goods, though a search of the place, which I understand the Jersey police found an excuse for making, proved that my conjecture is misplaced. But fancy a bird like Sharkey clinging to the rare edition thing!"

"'Tis funny," I agreed. "Must be a book-worm; those crooks take funny twists, don't they, Chief?"

"Yes. Peculiar case—that Sharkey bird."

The car had, by then, sped out of range of the house.

"S-s-s-nd street!" slurred the subway attache, poking his head into and back out of the car.

The train slid to a full stop. A little woman, carrying a big baby, dropped into the space between a dozing dominie and a slender thing with fiery-red lips; others swept through to the front end of the car; the doors skated back into their frame and the train jumped out of the station, headed for the next stop—Times Square.

When I stormed the portals of the Chief's office Madden was choking a fuzzy pipe-cleaner down the long neck of his black briar. Knowing what was uppermost in my mind, Lew plunged in.

"Sharkey was an East-sider. Spent his early teens with a pen behind his ear, bookkeeping in a dingy East Side shop—one of those ever-lighted hovels that sprawl beneath the level of the sidewalk hereabouts. You know the type, where the sun seldom filters in, smelly and unhealthy.

"One day something happened; what caused it we don't fully know, and Sharkey went wrong. They say he went in cahoots with a 'fence,' dabbled in stolen goods and finally landed downtown. They convicted him and sent him to Elmira. He was a first offender, according to the records.

"That was twelve years ago."

"And in the meantime he has been——?" I questioned.

"Apparently all right; his associates and movements have been shady, perhaps, but there have been no convictions," answered the official.

The door opened as Madden was about to continue.

Recognizing his caller, the Chief invited: "Come in, Nelson. Come right in."

The caller, an emaciated, wide-eyed, gaunt-looking derelict, stood hesitating in the doorway, and as I was about to excuse myself Madden motioned me to sit still.

"This chap, Mr. Nelson," began the Chief, calling the visitor's attention to me, "is also interested in the details of the Sharkey murder. You can speak freely, too."

The fellow took the proffered chair.

"Now, Nelson," continued Lew patronizingly, "when did you last see Sharkey and Cardillo together?"

"'Seldom-seen' was at Lewie Brady's joint in Harlem las' time I see him. Him an' Lewie was pals and——"

"Pals!" snapped the detective.

"Well, they was pals as much as Sharkey'd be pals with any of the grifters," corrected Nelson.

"Cardillo in the party, you say, Nelson?" asked Madden.

"Cardillo—no-o, no, Joe wasn't in the bunch," overly assured the informer, squinting his beady eyes. "Honest, Chief, I ain't been keepin' much cases on Cardillo lately."

"Possibly I am mistaken," countered the Chief, "but it seems that Joe told me he was at that party, Nelson. You know we have got him incommunicado, so you can speak freely without fear."

"You got him in where?" appealed Nelson doubtfully.

"Incom—— We have him locked downstairs," encouraged Madden.

"What was the party all about?" continued the officer.

"Oh—just a gatherin'. But I got an awful bang out of hearin' a clever guy like Sharkey tryin' to reform the mob that was up to Lewie's joint. He was tellin' them that the stealin' racket was the bunk; that the coppers were more smarted-up now than they was in the old days; that the bulls had the different grifts down to a gnat's eye-winker, when it come to peggin' who pulled off different kinds of jobs. He told us how a Central Office copper could step up to a 'peat' that had been touched off and tell, by the way it was shot, who shot it. Fancy this kind of ol' guff comin' from 'Seldom-seen'!"

"What's become of Cardillo's car, Nelson; do you know?"

"You got me, Chief; maybe 'High-heel' Betty is racing around with it. Sharkey and her used to burn up the roads with it when Joe wasn't usin' it."

Madden handed a box of fat cigars to Nelson and I, chose one himself, and addressed the "Stool-pigeon," as Nelson was called in the underworld.

"This gentleman and I have something on, Nelson; see you again; come in to-morrow about this time, if you hear anything."

"All right, Chief," and the man closed the door after him.

"Well," assured Madden, "his story abutts that of another who was one of the party up in Harlem. Both stories incidentally high-light an effort on Sharkey's part to reform the entire mob of crooks he knows and mingles with; can you beat that?"

"And the shooting, Chief," I appealed; "you haven't told me about that yet."

Lew placed his cigar at the edge of his desk, leaned back in his chair, and let fly: "I was rambling around in what we call the Fog Belt, over at the water front. As I drew near one of the shorter wharfs I heard voices—loud voices. With a certain amount of speed and caution," Madden smiled, "I slipped up on the men as two shots cracked the night air. One of the men paused, his pistol still aimed at the mark; the other man, evidently mortally wounded, dropped his pistol, stumbled forward, say, half a dozen paces, and fell head-first into the river.

"The other man, the one who fired the fatal shot, came to the edge of the pier and with me watched for the reappearance of his victim—or the body.

"The roll of the tide and the blackness of the water, the suddenness of the whole affair, I guess, rather hypnotized me, but not sufficiently that I forgot to handcuff the slayer.

"I waited a reasonable length of time, and when the body did not appear on the water's surface I marched my prisoner to a taxi and hustled him over here.

"The man was Cardillo.

"'What is this all about, Joe?' I asked him.

"'I got a tip that Sharkey was gunnin' for me; we met down here.' That was about the extent of Cardillo's conversation, all the words the gangster used.

"The gun I found belonged to Sharkey; at least it had his initials niched in the han-

dle, and we looked up where the gun was bought and the salesman gave us a patent description, which fitted Sharkey to a 'T.' He bought the weapon with a forged gun-permit."

"Now you'll need to await the river's pleasure in delivering the *corpus delicti?*" I ventured.

"I guess so. We dragged a bit soon after the arrest, but we found nothing; smart, foxy fellow, this Cardillo," mused Madden, frowning.

Three weeks passed and the water kept its evidence. The body was thought to have floated out to sea or been churned into impossible evidence by the twin-screws of the sea-faring liners and river tugs.

The prisoner, in the meantime, kept his tongue and seemed to take his confinement as a matter of course.

Then a series of crimes, an epidemic of breaks, perpetrated upon the merchants, left Cardillo practically forgotten, unsung, unthought of.

They began pretty well uptown and worked to various parts of the city, excepting "Gutterside." This neighborhood seemed immune from the criminal upon whose trail every officer in the city desired to camp successfully.

"What's it all about, Chief?" I asked Madden, dropping in one day to get out of a shower. "Who's this new-fangled thief that has the arms of the law guessing?"

"Tell me and I'll tell you," returned Madden.

"Some of his work reads like the old mystery yarns of Poe, eh?"

"Yep. We've puttied the key-holes and made all sorts of precaution list our way, but the robberies persist like that babbling brook. I am expecting one of the victims to drop in and try to identify a suspect we locked up a little while ago," finished the Chief.

"Mind if I stall around with this magazine and see what success your caller has?" I inquired.

"Nope. Make yourself at home, and I'll scratch off a wire to Chicago; we're holding a burglar here for the Windy City police."

"A gentleman here to see you, Chief," announced the clerk. "Wants to identify that fellow Gillis that you're holding."

"Wants to identify him!" roared Madden.

"So he says," smiled the clerk.

"Well, pick out a few officers, out of uniform, get them that looks most like this Gillis, and I'll let the caller take a bead on them. That way nobody'll have a kick coming."

I went to the "line-up" room with Madden and the caller. Fifteen men were lined up; the second one from the end, the one that I chose, in my own mind, as being the suspect, later proved to be one of the city's brightest and youngest sleuths, pale and sickly looking after a long siege in the hospital, following a close fight with death that was the result of a crook's bullet.

"Now," said the chief to the business man, "look the line over carefully, pick your man and then walk over and lay your hand upon his shoulder. Make sure he is the man you believe was loitering around your place of business; is that plain?"

"Yes, sir," assured the citizen, a small man with sparkling eyes and a scraggly mustache that, in an earlier day, had made the acquaintance of a perfumed mustachio wax.

The caller turned and faced the line-up, swept the row with his gaze and dropped back to the fifth man. From head to foot he rescanned the man's anatomy; then, without further delay, the caller walked over and placed his hand upon the shoulder of the fifth man in line. "I am certain this is the man, Chief!" he declared. There was conviction in the man's words and tone of voice.

The majority of the men in the line-up smiled. Madden himself wore an amused expression of partly stifled amusement. And in soft, confiding tones he assured the business man: "The man you have chosen, my friend, is Bob Ray, one of the most honorable members of my department."

"I can't help that, sir," indignantly countered the citizen; "that is the man who loitered around my place of business on both occasions I spoke of."

Doubt rode the moment, then Madden

crooked his large finger, indicating he wanted to speak to Bob Ray.

"Where were you last Tuesday, about five o'clock in the afternoon, Bob?"

"Out in front of the Lyric Theatre. Why, come to think of it, I called the office about that hour, about ten to five, and Murphy told me you wanted me to come down and help you with that stuff from Frisco, on the smuggling case."

"That's right, Bob; that was last Tuesday," and to top the alibi both Madden and his detective produced notebooks and frowned over certain notations therein.

The following day another business man came, saw—and was conquered by Bob Ray's appearance.

"That is the man, Mister Madden!" assured the second victim, pointing toward the detective, who was again in the line-up.

At first the chosing of Ray waxed a joke; then doubt removed the humor of the situation, when the third and fourth citizen readily chose Bob Ray as the man who hung around their place of business shortly before it was robbed.

Each time, however, the young detective had concrete proof that he was in another part of the city at the time in question.

It was on a night boat, steaming to Albany, that Madden finally unraveled the mystery—both of them.

"The day we were going to release Cardillo, having never found Sharkey's body, therefore having no case, I got a phone call from the superintendent of the Morningvale Club.

"'Chief,' the man began, 'some few weeks ago our swimming instructor disappeared. His name was Sharkey—James Sharkey. At the time we paid no attention to his absence, this in spite of the fact that he failed to send or return for his two weeks' salary. We just presumed he up and left, I guess. However, he was such a nice, quiet sort of a fellow, such a likable chap, that the members asked what became of him, and one told me that it might be the best thing if I reported his disappearance to your department. He lived in your district, you know, Chief; at least he gave a number in your district as his address.'"

Madden grinned and felt for a cigar; finding none, he loaded a stumpy black briar and continued: "Shortly after this club superintendent hung up Kenneth Barrows dropped in from up the State. I told him about the arrest of Cardillo and who the Italian had murdered. The boy laughed at me.

"'Murdered!' he exclaimed. 'Why, I saw Sharkey when our train pulled through Glens Falls last evening. Sharkey was in a pale-blue touring car, and at his side was that girl——'

"'High-heel' Betty?" I interrupted.

"'Right!'" he assured.

Putting two and two together, I sent for Cardillo.

"Sharkey was an expert swimmer, Joe, wasn't he?" I said.

"The gunman paled and frowned and said: 'What do you mean?'

"Why, you poor fish, what do you think we are, a bunch of small-town dubs? Think we don't know your game; think we haven't been hep to you all the time and letting you lay here in the can, while Sharkey and your Betty ride around on rubber!

"'Ride around on rubber!' snapped Cardillo.

"That's what I said!" I waited a second and then continued: "Jim Sharkey, your alleged friend, and 'High-heel' Betty, the woman who was 'only a sister-sort-of-a-pal to you two men, are enjoying each other's company up near Glens Falls!

"You know Betty's boast, Joe. She said one time: 'The man I take to my folks at Glens Falls is the man I marry.'"

"Then the Italian confessed. Cardillo told me that he had given Sharkey five thousand dollars to take the dive into the river. He related how they had followed me around for some time before they tailed me to the river front—an ideal spot for what they wanted. It made the deal look like the real thing, and the only thing involved was that Cardillo wanted to make it appear to this girl, Betty, that he and Sharkey had fought over her and that Cardillo had killed his best friend—for her. Of course Cardillo knew he would be kept in jail only until the police had given up hope

of finding the body, after which he expected to be released and join the girl.

"Sharkey, by the way, was supposed to go West, and stay out there. Cardillo said he had talked 'squaring it,' but after the make-believe murder he went crooked again; seems that temptation, or the call of the wild or the game, was too great."

"How do you know he went crooked again, Chief?" I asked as the boat blew its siren to another river bus.

A beam leaped from the sleuth's eyes.

"Because when we picked Sharkey and Betty up at Glen Falls, Sharkey confessed that he was the mysterious prowler; he even told me how he enjoyed the accounts about Bob Ray 'getting the rap' for the crimes."

The Chief brought a folder from his coat pocket and handed me two photographs. One was a likeness of Bob Ray, and the other was a picture of 'Seldom-seen' Sharkey.

They looked enough alike to be twins!

"I'm showing those pictures and telling the story that goes with them at the police convention to-morrow in Albany," said Madden.

LEARNED TO MAKE SPURIOUS BILLS IN PUBLIC LIBRARY

HOW three brothers followed the best authenticated recipes for success, read and studied diligently at the public library to learn how to make money, and presently were making a lot of it, was told recently to secret service agents. At first glance the money the three young men are said to have made looked just as good as that made by anybody else, but it was not.

After more than $5,000 of counterfeit money had been exchanged for money made in Washington, the three are now taking a brief vacation. John S. Tucker, local agent of the secret service, says the holiday may be extended. Robert Cashill, oldest of the three and 29, was locked up in the Old Slip police station, New York City, and John, 21, and David, 25, were held in Detroit. All are charged with making, having in their possession, and passing counterfeit money.

Not one of the three ever worked as engraver, photographer, or lithographer, so far as Mr. Tucker knows, yet the counterfeit one dollar and five-dollar bills went well for about a year. It is said they did it all themselves from instructions they got from books on photo-lithography which they drew from the public library. The secret service man says the work was done in an apartment at 1303 Amsterdam avenue, near 124th street, where for a time the wife of David Cashill lived with the trio and, Mr. Tucker thinks, was quite innocent of what they were doing with their presses and plates.

These facts and others concerning the three studious brothers, Mr. Tucker says, were imparted by Robert Cashill, who, he adds, confessed after his arrest one morning in the Amsterdam avenue apartment. Secret service men say they found in the apartment two printing presses, four sets of plates for one and five-dollar bills, and gloss protographic negatives, besides $359 in counterfeit money. There were also newspaper clippings of articles warning against the very counterfeits found.

According to the secret service men, Robert Cashill said he and David first took illegal liberties with legal tender two years ago, when they commenced "raising notes." That, the secret service men explained, means changing the numerals of value and other markings of real bills to make them appear of higher value.

The arrest of Robert came after word had been received here that David and John were under arrest in Detroit. Counterfeit bills passed in Newark, Boston, Philadelphia, Toledo, Bridgeport, Providence and other places, were from the plates seized in the Amsterdam avenue apartment, it was said. The bills counterfeited were $5 Federal reserve notes, $1 silver certificates and $5 notes of the First National Bank of the City of New York. All these counterfeits had been detected in circulation long ago and circular warnings had been issued against them.

Wasted Effort

By D. L. RADWAY

A RAIN-SOAKED wreck of a man dragged himself in at the street door and unsteadily shuffled up to the desk where Lieutenant Mott sat drowsily yawning as he watched the clock's painfully slow progress in the half-hour that must elapse before the midnight relief would send him on his way rejoicing.

It was nothing unusual on nights such as this to see similar crumbling wrecks, like man-hunted animals of the wild, seek shelter from the violence of a storm at any hazard.

Except for the casual glance his entrance had exacted from me, I gave him no further attention. The reverie in which I was buried was soon disturbed, however, as I caught the first few words addressed to the desk lieutenant.

"I wish to surrender myself into custody," he began. "I am George Marden. I killed Henry Talbot in a lodging-house on Hancock street two years ago. I committed the crime deliberately and wish to make no defense or appeal for clemency. My only request is that the trial be speedily consummated."

The even, modulated voice, without the slightest sign of excitement or hysteria in the man's manner, was greatly at variance with this most unusual confession—unusual in the fact that no murder had been committed on Hancock street at the time specified, nor had any unidentified murderer escaped. There was nothing in the police records bearing the slightest resemblance to the case he described in any particular. A George Marden, however, bank employee, at about the date referred to, had in some mysterious way disappeared for no apparent reason, his accounts being quite regular and his whereabouts or ultimate end the police so far had been unable to determine. But this poor, emaciated wreck, with snow-white hair and haggard face, barring a few unimportant details, tallied in no way with the description of the missing bank clerk.

He was about to continue his queer narrative, having maintained a stoic silence while Mott was reviewing the familiar records, when the lieutenant, disregarding him entirely, stretched his arms and, turning to me with a sleepy yawn, exclaimed:

"Well, it's midnight, Kernan. I guess you'd better lock this nut up till morning," he added, disappearing down the corridor in the direction of his locker.

As I led the confessed criminal to a cell I was touched by his pitiful state of unfeigned misery as he clung to my arm, pleading with me to listen to his story before his mind gave way.

"Let me at least free my soul from this internal torment," he supplicated. "Before Heaven, I am George Marden, and what I am saying is the truth."

Convinced that the man's reason was unbalanced, but interested in his profound sincerity, I listened to the tale he told with puzzling earnestness.

"I killed him! Talbot, you know. No! No!" he quietly assured me, noting my smile. "There is no doubt. I saw the patrol wagon take the body away. Oh, how I have suffered!" he wailed pitifully. "These two years have grown to centuries. I must have been mad. It is not my nature to kill. He drove me to it. It was my ruin or his death, and I have suffered terribly."

It was not the wild delirium of a madman, but the plain, crucifying contrition, the sorrow that only one of long suffering could

feel that disturbed rather than depressed me as, after locking him in the cell, I returned to the files and again carefully consulted every record. There was not the slightest circumstance that could be applied to the case.

I returned to the cell to assure the poor wretch he must be dreaming, that the records showed no murder had been committed.

"But there was," he insisted with vehemence. "It was a masterpiece of deviltry. Only a poor unfortunate in whom the world was not interested, a suicide buried, no doubt, in some unmarked grave. That was the logical conclusion, of course. How could it be otherwise? 'Twas a lie!" he continued vehemently, as much to himself as to me. "He was not a suicide. But, thank Heaven, I am returned to give my testimony and offer what atonement my poor, buffeted body is capable of.

"We were classmates, Talbot and I, both completing our course at the university together, and, fused by the common bond of poverty, we became inseparable both at college and after we went out into the world.

"I obtained a position in a banking house, but Talbot never seemed to get on very well and was frequently out of employment. It was the age-old obstacle that stood in our way. We were young, with all the extravagant desires of youth. We needed money. I got it from the bank—stole it. It was only a paltry five hundred dollars. I made it up by careful manipulation, and no one knew—no one save Talbot.

"Often I wonder why I did not continue then and go down as Talbot did, but I stopped at the first job. Oh, you can never stop! See where the first job has landed me!" He sobbed pitifully.

"Talbot got worse and worse. He couldn't seem to get away from drink. How I tried to pull him back to his feet, but he wouldn't listen. Then we quarreled. He disappeared soon afterward, and I lost track of him for months, when I received a letter from South America. He was sick and wanted money. I sent it to him again and again. It was always money! How he lied to me! But still I sent it. And then one day he appeared at the bank. At first I did not know him. Everything was gone—health, looks, honor. Even his voice had become a whine. Perhaps 'tis better he is dead. We were both failures, only I was worse—a coward.

"Fearing his appearance at my window might attract curious attention, I promised to meet him in the evening as I pleaded with him to go. My discomfort seemed to please him as, with mock dignity, he strutted toward the street. He had learned of my approaching marriage and leeringly had regretted his inability to attend. I met him as agreed, and helplessly followed him to a vile, villainous saloon, a big bare place with open tables covered with grime and stains. To one of these tables he led me, and there, during the brief space between the countless drinks, he began: 'Fortune has been more bestowing on you than me, George; a swell position and soon to marry the banker's daughter. I guess she doesn't know anything about that five hundred, hey, George? Wouldn't it look nasty in print?' I started to rise, furious at his reference to the past, but checked myself as I noticed the attention we were attracting.

"'Now, to return to the point,' he said, laughing. 'Why not have a final settlement? Then I can disappear, and you will never see or hear from me again. On my word of honor.' Who would have thought that Talbot could have sunk to such a depth?

"After swallowing another drink he returned to the subject. 'We'll say, George, a check for five thousand would be about the right figure.' But I interrupted: 'I haven't five thousand or——' I got no further when he burst forth in drunken laughter. He was throwing caution to the winds. 'That's easy. You know the way, George. Just another cipher on the old job. Give me your check-book if you haven't got the nerve.' Mechanically, stupefied with fear, I handed him the check-book and saw him stagger up to the bar, where he procured pen and ink from the bartender. Soon he returned with the pen for me to sign, which I did without looking at the check, as he had his hand covering all but the signature

line. Tearing it from the book, he crammed it into the pocket of his dirty shirt.

"At last I could go; I would have a little time to think before morning. As I essayed to rise he clutched me by the shoulder, now thoroughly drunk. 'You mush take me home, Georgie, old kid, just this wunsh.' At his direction I half-carried, half-dragged him to his room in one of the numerous lodging-houses that infest the district.

"It was a bright, moonlight night. The rays shone through the curtainless window, flooding the room with light, revealing in all its wretchedness the pallet that served him for a bed, upon which he threw himself. After a few incoherent, maudlin grunts he was asleep and snoring lustily. I was in the act of quitting the unsavory place when a gas-jet over his head arrested my eye. It was my chance; yes, the devil's opportunity. I was at my wits' ends. I thought I was justified. Quickly closing the window, I groped about the folds of his begrimed clothes till I recovered the check; then I opened the gasjet—wide open. I must have flown out the door, but I managed to turn the key in the lock.

"As I passed out a policeman was standing in the entrance. He surveyed me closely, but did not detain me. I could feel my heart hammering against my ribs as I reached the street, where I wandered aimlessly for hours.

"At daylight I returned involuntarily. Something was dragging me back to the scene of the crime. I was just in time to see the patrol wagon leave with the body. The landlady was in the entrance, and I asked what was the disturbance. She must have mistaken me for a detective as she answered, waving in the direction the patrol wagon had taken: 'They took him out just this minute. They carried him out, feet first. He's gone where he won't bother anybody else, and small loss it is.'

"Then George Marden ceased to be. I reached the seaboard and stowed away on a ship bound for Australia, where I slaved in the mines from morning till night. No one can know what physical and mental tortures I endured. But always the specter was before me, with no abatement. And then a fever got me, and I broke down completely. When I recovered, after days of delirium, my hair was white as you see it now, and the fight was all gone from me. I could not battle farther, so I resolved to go back."

As he paused I noticed he was growing faint from the exertion. I moved to support him, but he painfully waved me away, trying to continue, but reeled; I caught him as he collapsed and tenderly laid him upon the cot.

Well, he was George Marden, all right. He is back in the bank again, and do you know that that girl of his waited for him? If I'm any judge of such matters, they are supremely happy.

You see, I sort of took an interest in the poor, forlorn cuss when he collapsed in my arms. So, after sending him to the hospital, I started a little investigation on my own hook. There wasn't much to it. I located the saloon without much difficulty. The proprietor, who knew me, remembered the check episode and the swell gent that took the bum down to Mother Tucker's.

Upon arriving at the lodging-house designated, I found the mistress a bit cagy, but with little persuasion, not too gentle, she soon loosened her tongue. She remembered Talbot, if that was his name. "Oh, yes, the cops got him that morning for a holdup in the town," she volunteered as she led me to the room he had occupied.

"Wasn't he dead?"

"No, dead drunk. He's doing fifteen years in Bradford, don't you remember?"

"But wasn't he asphyxiated?" I inquired, pointing to the gasjet over the bed.

"Asphyxiated?" she replied in surprise. "No gas flowed. That fixture is only a dummy."

The "Clinch-Garrote"

By NELS LEROY JORGENSEN

DAN CORCORAN had surprised the girl's appraising glance resting upon himself once or twice in flickering regard, and he moved to where he might be nearer to her.

They were at the edge of a crowd of nondescript woodsmen, trappers and backwoods Canucks, all intent upon the most startling introduction to Gull Valley in years—a motion picture company at work. The Royal Film Company, Ltd., had attracted the same gaping mob every day since the building of the little studio, but Corcoran was not one of the usual hangers-on at the place.

With a twinkle in his keen blue eyes he glanced from the burly Scotch director on the set to the girl alongside him. Surprising her glance on himself again, he spoke:

"He's having trouble with his material, isn't he?"

She nodded in the most comradely fashion.

"Yes. Mr. Fabre's a splendid actor, but he can't get enough action into these rough-and-tumble scenes."

The Scotch director was attempting the almost impossible. Fabre, ostensibly the villain in the piece, was called upon for a leap from high up on the unfinished stairway to the head and shoulders of the hero, there to engage in a first-class tussle. But it was beyond him.

"A little action, mon, a little life!" the director roared through his megaphone. "Are ye afraid o' hoortin' him?"

That brought a ripple of laughter from the onlookers, players and natives alike, for the leading man was a healthy, strapping individual who tossed his antagonists about with a kind of brutal joy at being given the opportunity of hurting some one, but Faber didn't smile. He only whispered something between his teeth and prepared to do the scene over.

A sudden impulse, seconded by a look of certain appeal from the girl, moved Corcoran to step forward. He came up beside the director.

"I dislike to intrude," he said, "but it looks as if you need some action in this scene badly. Am I right?"

The thick-set director looked him over with insulting detail. Corcoran was only slightly larger than the man who had just failed in his realism, but something in his poise and carriage suggested a reserve of immense physical energy and power. He bore the inspection with the utmost coolness, noting in his own turn that the director's eyes were mean and very small, between heavy, paunched eyelids.

"Can ye give us it?" the latter demanded finally.

"I can put up a good attack," Corcoran said. "Suppose you try me?"

As he pulled off his mackinaw he was conscious that the dark actor he was supplanting temporarily was regarding him with anything but friendly eyes. He turned to the leading man.

"First, you're to throw me, I see," he observed. "Don't spare me; I'll land. And when I jump I'm coming down on you hard, so be prepared to fight. We'll go right through the railing."

"I'll fight," the leading man promised, breathing deeply and regarding his new opponent through half-closed, appraising eyes.

They went through a rehearsal. Corcoran was thrown almost the full length of the "prop" barroom, but he landed on his feet with a little, cat-like spring at the foot

of the stairs, darting upward in the same breath. At the top he turned, while the leading man faced the menace of a crowd of extras from the third step.

Corcoran jumped. And as he jumped his legs went out, to clamp both the arms of the bigger man to his sides when he landed on his shoulders. His own arms went about his victim's throat and stuck there like a steel vise. Together the pair tore through the flimsy railing and went down to the floor in a threshing heap. The director stopped a struggle which was growing decidedly realistic.

"Fine," he pronounced it. "Eligint. Ye'll go through the same thing now an' with the camera." Turning to Corcoran, he asked: "An' what did ye say your name was?"

"I didn't say, but it's Corcoran," was the reply.

"Umph! Mine's Haig. And he's my son," acknowledged the director grudgingly, gesturing toward the leading man.

Corcoran smiled, brushing himself off. He noticed Faber speaking with the girl, and saw her head jerk up quickly as she made some short reply. Then they both look toward him. As he turned he found young Haig regarding him narrowly, and he laughed.

"Too hard for you?"

Haig flushed and sent a quick glance toward the girl, who was well within hearing.

"Not yet," he replied very distinctly. "If you can stand it, I think I can."

Corcoran nodded.

"That's my specialty," he explained. "I call it the clinch-garrote—a combination of the old Spanish garrote, with the Canuck style of leg and feet clinch."

Haig raised his eyebrows slightly.

"I see. I imagine it's quite common among these—ah—woodsmen."

His tone said "backwoodsmen," but Corcoran was still smiling easily. "No, it's only been used once before that I know of," he said and turned away

The camera was ready. They went through the whole rough-and-tumble scene once more, and it was "shot" from the top of the stairs. When the scene was finished the director called off all work for the day.

"Could you use me about here?" Corcoran asked, approaching him. "I'm a trapper, but there's nothing doing in my line right now, and I want something to keep me busy."

"I'll take ye on as an extra, at about thirty a week, say," the director finally conceded.

Corcoran knew it was usury, but he accepted. He realized that he was needed now in other scenes and could command a much higher price. But he found that the girl had been watching him and thought he detected approval in her quick smile as he looked at her. Haig introduced him to two or three members of the company purely as an afterthought, but not to her. He contrived to walk past her, though, on his way out of the lot.

"Was that what you wanted me to do?" he asked.

"Yes!" Her deep blue eyes lit up. "I wanted to tell you; you simply brought that scene back to life."

"I'm going to join the company," he announced. "My name is Dan Corcoran, from points west."

"Mine is Marian Meade," she responded. "My home is a good deal farther south, in Georgia." She put out her hand with girlish frankness and he took it. "I'm very glad you're going to join me."

"You?"

"The company is mine," she explained. "Mr. Haig is my uncle; he's running it for me until I become of age. We're just getting under way,"

"I see," Corcoran murmured, a frown passing across his clear eyes. "And young Haig—he's your cousin, I suppose."

She hesitated, but only momentarily, yet he felt that a shade of distaste colored her hesitation.

"Yes, Ralph is my cousin," she acknowledged.

"He doesn't like me," Corcoran said bluntly.

"I don't think so. Possibly you jumped on him a little, too—strenuously." She was smiling.

"I wouldn't be surprised," Corcoran mused as they walked along. "I could have killed him with the least pressure of my forearm when I had him there, and he must have known it. A man of his size and reputation would naturally resent that knowledge."

"That was a terrible grip!" The girl shuddered. "It was absolutely new to us all. Only Mr. Faber had seen it before."

He jerked up his head with quick interest. "Faber had seen it before? Who is he, anyway?"

"He's as mysterious as you," she laughed. "He came from Montreal, I believe, with considerable picture experience. At least, he's a good actor, experience or not, and that's all we demand."

"That's all you know of him?" he pressed eagerly.

She nodded.

"The players of my company don't know each other well; it isn't necessary," she reminded him.

Corcoran felt that a slight rebuff was implied in her suggestion. Perhaps she sought to impress him with the fact that he was, after all, only an unknown and minor employee of hers.

Yet a certain welcome in her eyes each time they met reassured him. There seemed a sort of relieved gladness in her bearing when he would approach and draw her away from the others. In the close neighborliness of the little film colony their intimacy developed quickly. And in corresponding degree he did not fail to see the enmity he was stirring in Peter Haig and the director's son by his attentions to Marian during the days that followed.

Two weeks passed and snow came to the busy little valley, almost shutting it off from the outside world. Corcoran felt that his every move now was being watched by Peter and Ralph Haig. Gradually, as Marian Meade's pleasure in his society grew to be more pronounced, a suspicion of him seemed to have arisen. After all, he acknowledged, he was too obviously a man of the world to expect to be taken for a simple trapper such as he declared himself.

He spoke to Marian of the suspicion with which his movements seemed to be watched, and she corroborated his idea.

"I've been wanting to speak of it for some time," she said gravely, "but I've hated to tell you to leave here. My Uncle Peter doesn't like you." They were walking along on snowshoes atop a crust of gleaming snow, about half a mile from the studio camp. "He says that you're no trapper."

"Well, suppose I'm not?" demanded Corcoran bluntly.

"What are you, then?" she asked.

"What do they say?"

"Uncle Peter says——" She hesitated. "He says that Gull Valley is a good place for criminals to hide—in winter, with the passes almost blocked and the outside world cut off."

Corcoran made no reply. By mutual and unspoken consent, it seemed, they had halted. Presently the girl laid a hesitant hand on his sleeve.

"I think it would be best if you went away as soon as you've finished your part," she said.

"You do?" He looked up gravely. "Then you think I'm a fugitive from justice?"

"You won't tell me why you're here." She avoided his eyes.

"Have you ever thought that I might be staying on for reasons of my own, apart from what you suggest, and that one of the reasons might be—you?" Tenderly he beat down her eyes as they arose to meet his, but she turned away.

"I haven't wanted to," she faltered uncertainly. "It isn't—best."

There was a moment of silence. Corcoran's fists clenched, just as they always did, instinctively, in the face of a mental struggle of any sort. He felt that back of her words lay a certain fear of her uncle and his son.

"Marian!" he whispered very gently.

She turned. His arms went out. The next moment she was in them. He was holding her close and had kissed her. For a few swift seconds she lay in his clasp quiescently, and then struggled to free herself. He stepped back, to face her eyes

misted with tears. And her lips were quivering.

"I think you had better go," she said as evenly as she could.

He bowed quickly, breathlessly.

"I understand and I'm very sorry. It's your uncle—you're afraid of him and his plans for you, and you're afraid of me because you don't know me. Forgive me!"

Turning swiftly, he left her there, while he swung off on snowshoes over the crust of scintillating snow. Marian stood a long time, leaning heavily against a fallen, ice-encrusted tree trunk alongside the trail. All about bare brown trees towered in their nakedness into the chill blue sky, and beyond them was the never-ending white daze of the majestic hillsides sloping into Gull Valley.

When they met next day at the studio there was no welcome in her greeting. Ralph Haig's eyes, though, held an exultant light only half-hidden in their depths, and Faber seemed more content with his lot than was usual.

Corcoran found the girl alone.

"Are you angry with me?" he asked.

"I think we had better not speak of it," she said, turning away.

Corcoran shrugged his shoulders, and he found Peter Haig's basilisk stare fixed upon them both. The director nodded to him and jerked his thumb toward the company office. Corcoran followed him inside the timber shack, half expecting what was to come. The interior was odorous with pitch, pine, tar and resin. Once inside Haig faced him coldly across a cheap oak desk.

"I'll be askin' that ye see less o' my niece, Mr. Corcoran," he said.

Corcoran only raised his eyebrows politely and waited for him to continue. That program infuriated Haig.

"I know I'll need ye for the finish of this picture, but while you're here I forbid ye to be seein' Marian," he added sternly.

"I understand," Corcoran drawled. "Mr. Haig," he went on quickly, "when Marian tells me something to that effect, I'll consider it—not before." And turning, he swung himself lightly out of the office.

Haig was so choked with rage that he couldn't speak at once. Halfway across the cleared patch that separated office from studio, Corcoran heard his hoarse voice raised after him:

"Ye'll do as I say, or I'll run ye clean out o' this patch o' country!"

Careless of the wondering glances cast upon him by some of the players he passed, Corcoran made for the coat he had discarded in preparation for that morning's work. When he picked it up he was lighting a cigarette, so a paper that fluttered harmlessly from his pocket and lay inconspicuous on the white snow covering the ground was unnoticed.

He made for his cabin at the edge of the camp, where he lived quite alone. Ralph Haig, though, was just behind him, and with a stealthy air he had scooped up the sheet of paper Corcoran dropped and stuck it quickly in his pocket.

A little later he read it, and that night there was a conference in Haig's cabin, which was shared by the director with his son and his niece. All the principals and employees of the company were present, seated in various attitudes about the fire-lit living-room—all except Corcoran.

Plans for the following day had been discussed when, with a triumphant smile that he tried ineffectually to mask, Ralph Haig placed the captured sheet of paper before his father.

"Here's something that should interest every one," he said, spreading it out with careful fingers.

The elder Haig bent over.

"What is it?" The other players crowded about eagerly.

"It fell out of that Corcoran fellow's pocket to-day," Ralph Haig explained. "I rather think the mystery surrounding him is solved."

The director, scanning the sheet, exploded suddenly:

"A criminal!"

He read aloud:

"'Wanted: Martin Duggan for the murder of George Wade, bank messenger, at Glencairn, Alberta, by barbarous strangulation. Dangerous criminal!'"

There was a moment of ticking silence.

Marian drew away from the group about the table unobserved. Then:

"It's Corcoran!" Haig exclaimed. "It's Corcoran and his damn clinch-garrote, that's who it is. We've a murderer in camp!"

"I thought that way," Ralph smiled. "Remember, he said it was his specialty?" He was answered by scared, serious-faced nods of the head from the group about the table.

Marian was gazing with fierce intensity at the window of the shack, where for one brief moment she had glimpsed a white, strained face pressing against the pane, to disappear as Haig stood up grimly.

"I'm going for the sheriff and the Mounted," he announced, "and I'm wastin' no time." He reached for his coat.

"Need any help, father?" his son volunteered, choking down the exultation in his voice.

Haig snorted contemptuously.

"Help nothin'! I'll be back in the morning."

He went out. As the door opened and closed a little flurry of large snowflakes fell inward on the board flooring. Marian was straining her eyes toward the window. Finally she left to go to her room, while the little group discussed the news in awed whispers about the circle of flames in the fireplace.

The night seemed never-ending to the little colony in Gull Valley. Snow had been falling since the afternoon, and the entire outside world was shut off in a silent blanket of never-ending flakes. But when a cold, reluctant sun lit up the ramshackle studio buildings in the morning Peter Haig had not returned.

The actors stood about, waiting and talking in low voices. Ralph Haig arrived last of all. Marian had no part in the flow of conversation that was all concerning the disclosures of the night before, but her eyes were swollen slightly, either from tears or loss of sleep.

Suddenly a woodsman burst into the gathering, and his serious face cast a spell of silence on them. He drew Ralph Haig aside. When he had listened to what the native had to say to him, the younger man turned to the others a face white as death. Before he opened his dry lips they had guessed what had happened.

"It's my father," he choked. "He's dead—garroted!" he finished in dull horror.

They crowded around with a dumb, mute sort of desire to be near each other, while the woodsman told his story. The snow had ceased falling, but it seemed that the sun was unwilling to lend any cheer to the dreary monotony of the landscape. The day was gray and sullen.

The woodsman and his son had found the body of Peter Haig in a little gully where the west trail crossed it, he said, early that morning. He had sent his son on for the sheriff and the Mounted Police at Longine, for which place Peter Haig had been bound. Haig had evidently been killed from behind by strangulation, he finished, but declared that there had been no evidences of a struggle on the ground near the spot. Instinctively the face of every hearer was turned toward the lonely shack where Corcoran dwelt.

Marian was white-faced, seemingly on the verge of hysterics. Murmuring some denial in a blurred undertone, she hurried away to her own cabin. They all watched her go dumbly.

There was little doubt among the members of the company as to who the murderer was. Sitting alone in the shack she occupied with Peter Haig, even Marian began to ask herself questions. She remembered a face at the window the night before—that face had been Corcoran's, white and intent. And the quarrel of yesterday.

But in spite of everything, her instinct told her it was impossible; that Corcoran, though he might fight and kill, would strike from the front—never from behind. Anyone could tell that from his fearless eyes.

Meanwhile, the long hours of morning dragged on with leaden monotony and no one approached the house of Corcoran; Corcoran in turn did not approach the studio. There was wonder and speculation and talk of vengeance and lynching, but only talk.

Finally the sun hid entirely behind leaden clouds until it seemed that dusk had come

on, and through the cheap glass panes in the scattered cabins, fires made a futile effort to reflect a little cheer. Then from her window Marian saw some newcomers arrive—two big men in the heavy furs and blue trousers of the Northwest Mounted Police, and two woodsmen, one of whom she guessed must be the sheriff.

They were talking to Ralph, and as she watched them they were joined by a timorous cluster of the other players. In a moment, she knew, they would be hunting for Corcoran. The others had been afraid. Those men would not be.

Meanwhile, as though rejoicing in the sudden series of incidents that had left him an outcast, Corcoran sat alone before the huge stone arch of his fireplace, smoking his pipe and staring into the flames with a fixed, calm intensity. He seemed to be waiting with grim patience for the denouement which he knew was coming.

Suddenly he raised his head. Some one was fumbling with the latch at the door. It was opened easily, and he faced Marian, who came in hurriedly, and leaned with her back against the barrier. He arose impassively.

"So—you've come?" he said. "Are the police with you?"

That seemed to sting. She flinched, and crossed rapidly to where he stood, his slender frame limned against the flames.

"No, but they're coming. That's why I got here first, to—to tell you to escape before they get you."

"You expected to find me here, then?" he asked irrelevantly.

"Does it matter?" she replied impatiently. "Will you go—before they arrive?"

He looked down at her, smiling gently, but calm and unaffected by her words.

"First you must answer me," he said. "Did you come here to warn me, believing me guilty of your uncle's murder?"

"Oh, how can you dare to stand here and talk, with the rope almost around your neck!" Marian exclaimed. "I come to tell you so you can get away before they arrive. Guilty or not guilty, I want you to go." Her eyes dropped.

He caught her shoulders.

"Marian!" he whispered. She looked up. "You'll have to take my word for it that I'm innocent. Just leave me to take care of myself. But you—was I right or wrong the other day in the woods, when I saw that you cared?"

"How can that matter?" she cried fiercely. "They'll be arresting you with unbreakable evidence for two murders in a few minutes. You must escape, I tell you!"

"Am I right or wrong about you?" he persisted.

Her eyes were raised slowly to his and before their challenge hers fell. "You were right," she barely whispered.

"Then don't worry, Marian," he said gently.

"You'll go?"

He shook his head.

"Hardly; I know what I'm doing."

"But you must——"

Even as the words left her lips they were cut off by the sound of a single, heavy rap at the door. She broke away from his side in dismay, her eyes wide with fright.

"Oh, it's too late now—too late!" she cried. "They're here."

Corcoran faced the door.

"Come in," he said, in the same even voice he had used since first he set foot on the studio ground.

The sheriff entered first, cautiously. Behind him came the two officers, who started at sight of Corcoran. After them came Ralph Haig, vengeful and vindictive, and upon their heels followed all the players employed by the Royal Films. No one noticed Marian's presence; Dan Corcoran, outlined in the glow of the flames behind him, held the entire stage. He looked about at the circle of faces, indistinct in the fitful light, and his glance seemed to rest with a certain satisfaction upon Faber.

"You might shut the door," he suggested quietly.

Some one obeyed him automatically. One of the police stepped in more closely to examine his features, and then exclaimed:

"Hullo—Corcoran!"

"Hello, Bob," Corcoran replied easily.

The sheriff approached officiously.

"You're Corcoran?" he demanded.

The latter nodded. The sheriff put forth the literal hand of the law. "Then I arrest you for the——"

But Corcoran raised a detaining hand.

"Just a minute, sheriff," he interposed, quietly. "This is my party, whether you know it or not." He turned to the big policeman who had spoken to him. "There's our man, Bob!" he announced in a quick, even voice, and pointed at Faber, who was near the door.

Even as Corcoran spoke the actor had his hand raised toward the latch, but in that brief second Corcoran had whipped his pistol free and it spoke with a quick jet of flame. A bullet flattened itself against the heavy iron latch and Faber recoiled in dismay.

"Steady," breathed Corcoran, his eyes narrowed. "One false move from you, Faber, means your finish. I'm taking no more chances, my friend."

Faber subsided as the second policeman stepped to his side. But the sheriff would not submit to being thus ignored.

"Who are you?" he demanded, aggressively, his eyes on the leveled revolver.

"Corcoran — sergeant, His Majesty's Mounted Police."

There was a moment of silence in the big room, and then there followed a concerted gasp of surprise. The sheriff of Longine, looking to the police for confirmation, was answered by short nods. But Ralph Haig shoved himself to the foreground of the little circle.

"I don't give a damn who you are," he said angrily. "It's you that pulls the clinch-garrote and my father was killed that way!"

The sheriff, listening, looked again to Corcoran.

"For your satisfaction, Haig—simply because you have the right to know how your father met his death, and for no other reason—I'll explain," Corcoran said. "I've followed this man Faber, whose real name is Martin Duggan—from Glencairn, where I'm stationed, to this district. We had no protographs of Duggan, so I had to do some sleuthing.

"When he announced to Miss Meade that he had seen the clinch-garrote before, it was in pure bravado, but enough for me. That was my only reason for using it in that scene; I thought if the murderer was present, he would betray himself in some way. He did."

"But my father?" Haig interrupted.

"Last night," Corcoran went on quietly, "Peter Haig, in his anxiety to harm me, went ahead a little too hastily. He was spoiling my plans. I saw him start for the police, so I started, too, to intercept him."

Corcoran paused.

"I missed him. He took the west trail and I took the east. But Faber knew what the coming of the police would mean: investigation and detection. So he pulled his old trick, pretty certain that I'd be blamed for it under the circumstances."

"But why didn't you arrest him?" the sheriff demanded when the account was finished.

"Because I had to make sure of my man," Corcoran replied. "I knew nothing except that he'd seen the clinch-garrote before. It was only yesterday I finished my job; I went through his shack and found letters addressed to Duggan and a hoard of money he'd been saving there. In a day or two, I expect, you'd have been heading for the States, eh, Duggan?"

But Duggan was silent in resignation. His silence put the final stamp of truth on every word Corcoran had said. But the latter turned to the sheriff.

"I didn't arrest him to-day for—reasons of my own," he went on, glancing half advertently toward Marian. "I knew he wouldn't get away; the east trail, I discovered last night, was blocked with drifts and you fellows were coming over the west." He paused, smiling again. "And now—do you want any more of me?"

The sheriff seemed to understand his dismissal and started for the door. The others followed more leisurely, stopping to gape uncertainly at the figure of Faber, whose eyes avoided every one. But the big trooper stayed.

"He's your prisoner, Dan," he ventured.

"Do me a favor and take him in with you, Bob," Corcoran smiled. "I'll be busy in this place for a while and I can pick him

up on my way back. Here's the warrant."

Bob smiled toward Marian as he accepted the warrant and clamped handcuffs on the unresisting Duggan. When they had all gone, Corcoran turned slowly toward her. She was standing alone, her face half averted from him, in the shadows beside the fireplace.

"I wish you'd understand that I wasn't playing to the gallery just then, Marian," he said. "I could have told you who I was long ago—would have told you that day in the woods, except that you tried to make me believe you didn't care. So I kept silent today—I wanted to make you prove to yourself that you loved me, no matter what I was. And I did. You understand?" he finished very gently.

For a moment she did not move, and he waited. Then

"Oh, you did, Dan, you did!" she cried, as with a happy little sob of surrender she swung about into his arms.

ARMED THUGS SEIZE $1,200

THREE robbers who held up two men in the office of the National Cast Stone Company, 157th street and River avenue, the Bronx, recently, obtained the $1,200 payroll and then kidnapped a taxicab chauffeur at the point of a revolver, forcing him to drive them to safety.

Alphonse Vinci of 38 East 153d street was in the office of the concern at noon after having returned from a nearby bank with the money to pay off his employees. William O'Brien, the firm's estimator, also was in the office.

Two men with caps pulled down over their eyes appeared suddenly in the doorway. "Up with your mitts and be quick about it!" they ordered, whipping pistols from their pockets. Vinci and O'Brien obeyed.

One robber removed the money from its newspaper wrapper. Just then an employee in the yard, looking through a window, saw what was going on. He raised an alarm and Vinci's partner, Joseph Caruso, seized a barrel stave and started for the robbers. A third robber, covering Eugene Williams, the taxicab chauffeur, fired two shots at Caruso. Both went wild, but Caruso stopped and threw up his hands.

With a volley of oaths and warnings against pursuit, the robbers jumped into the taxicab and disappeared in the direction of the stadium. The number of the taxicab noted by the victims was flashed to Police Headquarters and an alarm was sent out. Before Williams was traced he had given himself up at the 135th Street Station. After he had given his version of the hold-up he was not arrested. He said that the three men engaged his taxicab at Gerard avenue and 149th street, and told him to drive within a short distance of the stone company's plant. Two of the men stepped out and the third pointed a revolver at him, ordering him to keep the engine running. When the robbers emerged with the payroll and got into the taxicab they told Williams to drive west on 161st street near the stadium, across Macomb's Dam Bridge into Manhattan and south to 133d street, between Seventh and Eighth avenues. The men with the money got out and the third man ordered Williams to drive him to 121st street and Mount Morris Park, where he left the machine after paying the $1.50 registered on the meter.

"Beat it and drive north quick!" was the parting warning of the bandit. Williams said the men were not foreigners, although the victims of the hold-up thought the robbers were Italians.

Dangerous Occupations

IT is a fact that years ago there was hardly an occupation under the sun totally free from some physical disease or ailment, more or less dangerous, possessing a deleterious effect upon the worker. The dangers of coal mining were apparent to all the world, but the dangers of sandpaper making are little known. And yet, in this occupation there was a high mortality. From the sand or glass used there arises a most dangerous dust. This inhaled by the worker at once has a deleterious effect. One boy who worked at sandpaper making, and who came under the observation of a doctor, was attacked with a cough the first day he began work, rapidly developed signs of acute pulmonary disease, and died within the month.

But the dangers connected with sandpapering are as nothing compared with those in trades where lead is used. This metal takes the first place among poisonous substances employed in manufactures. The diseases resulting from its compounds were alarming, if only for their number. They include colic, constipation, dyspepsia, anthralgia, paralysis, loss of sight, atrophy of muscles, general emaciation, anemia, epileptic convulsions, encephalopathy, and renal disease. The man suffering from lead poisoning may be easily noted. Along the junction of the gums with the teeth may be seen a blue line never seen in the mouths of other workers.

Smelters—operatives who melt lead to make alloys—plumbers, and others are the most likely sufferers from the dreadful diseases which follow upon the absorption of lead in the system. A curious example of poisoning by metallic lead is on record. In a flour mill abroad, the small leaden buckets working on an endless chain poisoned the flour in passing over them. But the injurious effects of lead are not only felt by the smelter or the plumber. People who eat canned food have suffered from its presence in the tins, and are thereby rendered liable to a dangerous illness.

"Phossy jaw" was an ailment only too common among match makers. Happily, however, in some of the best manufactories of "safeties" and similar matches, the phosphotus used is in amorphous form, which gives off few or no dangerous fumes. It is in the inhalation of phosphorous fumes where the danger to the worker lies, and this exposure to the poisonous vapor produces the "phossy jaw"—or phosphorous mouth. One of the first complaints of a matchmaker was toothache. The teeth are slowly but surely eaten out; very frequently ulceration sets in, and then follow all the other symptoms of "phossy jaw."

Unless the man or woman ceases from his or her occupation, death comes only too soon. Considerable discussion has arisen as to the dangers arising from phosphorous fumes. A government order to the effect that children and young people with diseased teeth are ineligible for employment in match factories, shows the importance attached to the question.

Few workers are so hardly placed as the men engaged in chemical works. In the manufacture of alkali from salt, the salt-cake man performs no mean part. As his work is hard, so are the dangers and annoyances surrounding him wearing and weakening. The strongest men only can do the work. Even then the salt-cake man has to wear a thick flannel muffler over his mouth to prevent the inhalation of the acid gas given off from the salt-cake furnaces. And when this is done the acid penetrates the bandage and ruins the worker's teeth and gums. Not only does the acid attack the mouth, but it further eats into the hands and arms until the worker's limbs assume a curiously corrugated look.

The lime-house worker is even worse off. Without lime, of course, no bleaching powder could be made. Before anything can be done with it, the lime itself must needs be reduced to a fine powder. This work is done by the lime-house man who, day after day, is engaged in sifting and beating and slaking the unpleasant material. The lime flies about the chamber in a thick cloud, which the worker has to breathe all day long. The lime, as it touches the arms and face, stings horribly. It is impossible for any one to work under such conditions with the mouth and nostrils uncovered. Accordingly, the lime-house man gags himself by inserting between his teeth a piece of flannel.

To save his face he makes a mask of paper, which, with a cap on the head, is practically his sole defense against the wasp-like sting of the lime. No man dare breathe through the nose. Instead, he inhales the air through a mouth protector, and then gives it out by the nose. It may be easily understood that, laboring under these conditions, he is unable to work in spells longer than twenty minutes. He is unable to wash himself in water; grease is the only medium he dare use.

Of course many of these dangers are a thing of the past now, for improved methods and modern machinery have helped to get rid of the danger. Dangerous occupations attract men, though, as you can see in the circuses, ammunition factories and in the feats of divers and steeple-jacks.

$50,000 IN GEMS STOLEN FROM A SHIP'S SAFE

DIAMONDS valued at $50,000 were stolen from a safe in the captain's cabin of the Lamport and Holt liner *Boswell* recently. The loss was reported to the Brooklyn police by Captain Leon O. Everett, the master. He said his cabin had been visited while he slept and he had not discovered the theft until he found the key of the safe had been taken from a pocket of his trousers beside his bunk. The police held two of the crew, who had been on leave, but released them when they accounted for their movements.

The gems were in two packages, placed for safe keeping in an old safe. One bag contained $30,000 in cut diamonds consigned to the New York Trust Company and the other had $20,000 in uncut diamonds which were being forwarded to Ladenberg & Thalman, 25 Broadway. Besides the gems the thieves got $600 and a gold watch belonging to the captain, who said that the cabin of the first mate also had been visited and $50 and the mate's watch stolen. The *Boswell* was berthed at the foot of Cranberry street, Brooklyn.

The police are working on the theory that the robbery was the work of "cabin jumpers," thieves who make a specialty of robbing vessels in port. Captain of Detectives Patrick J. Randalls, who is investigating, said he believed the thieves were working on information that the crew would be paid off and they were after the $3,000 payroll money when they accidentally discovered the diamonds. Presumably, he said, they had expected to find the key of the safe in the captain's pocket.

Captain Everett said he placed the package containing the diamonds in the safe just before he retired at 11 p. m. The safe is in the outer cabin and separated from the captain's sleeping quarters by a screen door. Nearby is the mate's cabin.

The *Boswell* arrived from South American ports. She brought twenty-eight passengers.

Decoy Ducks

By GEORGE BRONSON-HOWARD

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

"A PRISONER FOR A PRISONER"

"NOW you know how it stands, my dear Miss Grahame," said the man who wore the red necktie. "My terms are a prisoner for a prisoner. That's the long and short of it. I would like to hear what you have to say."

He was far from being a commonplace-looking person, the man who spoke. In some indefinite way he was foreign.

His card had read "Anthon Melvus," an address followed, then, in the lower left-hand corner, "Portrait Painter; Miniatures"—both in agate type.

Gerda Grahame had met painters and artist-craftsmen at many Chelsea studio parties who were far more foreign in speech and appearance than he.

She stared at him, almost uncomprehendingly. Could such a startling speech as he had made to her really be delivered in so quiet and commonplace a manner by one who bore every sign of belonging to one of the peaceful professions.

Could such a tale of horror be told so quietly amid such homely surroundings as her little white-and-black hotel apartment sitting-room on Bush street?

Why, this murderous fellow, this assassin, had actually sipped her tea and eaten her little cakes and lettuce sandwiches, and he poured out his well-nigh incredible story as though it concerned nothing save subjects of the most ordinary tea-table conversational sort.

She had said nothing since asking him how many lumps of sugar he took. He had arranged his second teacup himself. She would not have dared lift a piece of precious Carlton ware with hands that trembled the way hers were trembling.

Yet this stranger sat quite composed and, in his way, well-mannered, waiting patiently for her reply. She supposed she must rouse herself from this death-like lethargy and answer him. But it seemed so unnecessary, such a waste of effort. His proposal was very revolting.

She was indignant about it, would have risen and bade this fellow begone with his impudent proposals. Only——

Only, if she did, Dick, her brother, was to die! Within the week!

"Dick was to die!" How stagey it sounded! How ridiculous the whole thing was! Why hadn't she the courage to assert herself and tell the man if he wasn't out of her place within a moment she would telephone for the police?

Why *hadn't* she? "Because, God help me," she answered herself, not realizing that she was speaking aloud, "I'm afraid that, absurd or not, this story he tells me is true."

He answered her, seeming to find nothing strange in her speaking aloud. Indeed, this fellow had the fashion of making the most bizarre happenings seem utterly commonplace, everyday affairs.

"Most indubitably true, dear lady. But why absurd? You knew your brother had gone to Russia on a secret mission, didn't you? You knew that before you left England for the States. He went at least a week before you, eh?"

She did not contradict him, so he went on:

"You knew, also, that he was going to a scene of strife and tumult, with various parties and factions struggling to see who was to be top-dog. At that particularly unfortunate time for him, however, a number of these parties were drawn together by the magnet of the Moscow Soviet, knowing that, with the capitalistic-backed offensive from Poland to fight, the Moscow Soviet was the one form of government that had shown any signs of stability. Consequently a number of the people whom your brother was to have used in his investigations—using them at cross-purposes one against the other—were for the moment united with the very foes he had come to report upon. You see that, don't you?"

"Yes." She saw that well enough, she supposed, although, in reality, all she really saw, or understood, was that, somehow, Dick was to die! In a week! Unless she could save him.

"Now, follow me closely, I beg of you, my dear lady. Your brother abandons the safeguard of his British commission and his Scottish nationality. He doffs both his rank as an officer and his name as a Scotchman. In order to enter Russia in the way he deems best for his purpose, he assumes the name of a Polish officer and actually banks on certain Polish successes to bring him into a certain territory where he means to adopt another disguise and disappear. In order to do what he plans he actually engages in conflict with Soviet troops, leading a Polish company. During this brief brush I speak of certain prisoners are taken.

"One of these prisoners remembered your brother as the Polish officer in command of the battalion which fought his own and which took him prisoner. This prisoner, being an officer, was accorded certain mess privileges that brought him into contact with your brother. When, later, having been exchanged, he sees your brother in the plain blouse of a Russian *moukjik* on the streets of Petrograd several months afterward, is it not natural, Poland and Russia still being at war, that he should challenge your brother as a Polish spy? I repeat, is it not natural, my dear young lady?"

"Why," faltered Gerda Grahame, "why—yes—I suppose it is—only—natural. And then——"

"And, then, quite as naturally, your brother made an attempt to escape, knocking down the patriotic officer who challenged him, which resulted in a street fight and chase that assumed the proportions of a riot. Our people are so excitable, dear lady, these days, with all the world against them in their brave fight."

"Go on," she interrupted in a strained voice. "Was my brother hurt?"

"Fortunately for him, yes! You may ask why 'fortunately'? Because, had he not been rendered hors de combat by the furious mob, trampled under foot and generally beaten into——"

"Oh, don't, don't!"

"——Insensibility," the man with the red tie continued calmly—"why, had this not been so, his case would have been summarily disposed of long before this opportunity of saving him could have occurred. As it is, he lingered on in the sick-bay, suffering from concussion of the brain and unable to account for himself for weeks. As it is a rule of any stable and civilized government like ours to give a prisoner every chance of explaining himself before visiting sentence upon him, your brother was afforded that opportunity. He failed to avail himself of it, however, and had it not been for our excellent secret police he would have gone to his death with us believing he was no more, no less, than our patriotic informant believed him to be."

He paused to give her some opportunity for comment or correction, but she made neither, so he continued briskly:

"Therefore, in the usual way of dealing with spies, he was tried as a Polish officer, under the name he gave, found, out of uniform, within our lines—an enemy alien and officer of an enemy nation endeavoring to obtain unlawful information as to our military plans. Then he was tried by drumhead court-martial, found guilty, and sentenced to be shot. That was a week ago."

"I thought such sentences were carried out without any delay," she hazarded weakly.

"It is easy to conjecture that you have

had your own training in matters military, Captain Grahame," he approved, smiling, giving her, for the first time, her rank as a company commander of W. A. A. C.'s, one she had won during the war and still held until her own corps of special service veterans should be demobilized. "Yes, under ordinary circumstances, one hour to make one's peace with—whatever one is pleased to call Divine—and then a blank wall, a firing-squad, a handkerchief over the eyes, and the order to 'Fire!'"

He seemed to get some peculiar relish out of enumerating these grisly details. She shuddered, as he meant she should.

"Then—why was his postponed? You say you knew nothing of this case, then?"

"The day before yesterday it became evident to this branch of the 'Brotherhood' that our present difficulty might be solved by a certain sort of exchange in the matter of prisoners. Your brother, Lieutenant-Colonel Grahame, had his opportunity to save himself, but he rejected it. Had he given his captors the information they required—his reason for being in Russia—all would have been well."

Her concern was for the moment swallowed by a certain angry scorn.

"Surely they must have been mad to expect an officer and a gentleman to brand himself as a traitor."

"Oh, no, my dear lady, not mad in the least. Life is a very precious thing, even to officers and gentlemen. But when they gave him a second opportunity—one he might so easily have embraced and without the least discredit to himself——"

"What was it?"

"He was told if he declared his real rank and real name he would be freed, after a few trifling formalities."

"And give the Soviet people a chance to air another grievance against the English-speaking peoples? No, no, that would have been as bad!"

"You are a very scrupulous pair, you Grahames," stated the man with the red tie, with an air of fine detachment, as though commenting upon the unreasonable activities of some queer creatures observed under the microscopical lens. "But, however, it seems he is now to have a third chance. It is for you to say whether he lives or dies. He was given two weeks after the court-martial, during which, with death coming fast upon him, it was hoped he would reconsider one or the other of the proposals. They are still hoping that he may yet decide to declare himself. However, a week still remains. That cannot be altered unless *you* alter it. What have you to say?"

"I do not understand. I am confused. This other man—what has he to do with my brother? Why——"

"Mademoiselle will explain just what is not clear to her? What does she not understand? In what have I been confusing? In what detail or particular, mademoiselle?"

She stammered and grew red. Why—why, in what you said you wanted me to do. It seemed so—preposterous."

"Perhaps mademoiselle means 'unusual.' I grant that. Preposterous, no! As leader of the Brotherhood, here in San Francisco, I come after careful consideration of your brother's case to afford you this opportunity to save his life. In exchange you must act as the decoy to lead within our reach a certain Captain Oliver Kemp, an intelligence officer, U. S. A., who has proved a traitorous brother. He will land in San Francisco to-morrow or next day en route to Washington, carrying certain secrets of our order, to our great hurt and harm. Now, although your government can prove nothing against myself, nor any other member of the local brotherhood, I have learned, to my sorrow, that we are all docketed as 'undesirable aliens,' 'suspicious characters,' etc. I have also learned that such persons as myself and my friends will not be allowed on the dock when the Pacific mail boat arrives. Also that the police have forbidden such as we to pass through certain streets during Kemp's stay here. By which is meant the streets where the great restaurants, theatres, banks and the like abound. So that not one of us has the chance of getting near enough to this Kemp to exchange a single word with him, let alone near enough to carry him into captivity. Do you understand now why it is we need you?"

He had gone through this incredible explanation in an ordinary conversational tone. His voice had not risen a note. As Gerda Grahame eyed this singular person her impression of unreality returned. Could it be possible that this was some madman who had escaped his keepers and had come stumbling into her rooms with some manufactured melodrama that he had spun from the cobwebs in his own crazy brain?

No, the fact that the man knew as much as he did, yet spoke so lightly of the manner in which the information had been acquired, showed that here was no person suffering from delusion. Rather a competent, keen brain, so accustomed to dealing with matters she termed melodrama that they seemed only the ordinary commonplaces of life to him. But when she recalled what had been happening in Russia during the past six years she was not in the least surprised that melodrama should have been his daily meat.

He continued:

"We wish to gain possession of the body of this man, Oliver Kemp. If it becomes possible to obtain possession without needless violence, we welcome it. That is why this opportunity is afforded you. 'A prisoner for a prisoner'—your brother's liberty in exchange for this man Kemp's——"

"Are you sure it is not my brother's life in exchange for this man Kemp's life?" she asked, suddenly keen.

"If it becomes necessary, one after another of the local 'Brotherhood' will sacrifice his own life if he cannot take Kemp's life otherwise. But we desire neither to lose our own lives nor to make a public execution of this traitor Kemp. Frankly, it is not our purpose to take his life."

"How may I believe that?" asked Gerda Grahame.

"Why should we go to all this circumlocution when a revolver shot from close quarters will finish the matter just as satisfactorily and leave us with your brother still to execute? Answer me that? No, we desire the satisfaction of certain conversations with Captain Oliver Kemp. We must know what he knows, in all its ramifications. A more dangerous man to Russia—and Freedom—does not exist to-day.

"There is held in Washington by a species of internment order a high officer of our Brotherhood. It so happens that he headed a certain branch of the Brotherhood that committed what your government is pleased to call a crime against international law. He calls for his release as an official of the Moscow government, which also pleads most earnestly for his presence in his own country. Your government says: 'Very well. If he cannot be identified as the Brotherhood leader against whom we have a heavy claim, we will release him within three months.' Those months are up in another two weeks. Meanwhile Kemp arrives in Washington. *He* can identify him as the Brotherhood leader. Which will mean his trial before the high tribunal and his probable internment for life, or until his usefulness to us has passed.

"My dear lady, I have opened my hand and disclosed to you not only the cards in it, but those in the entire pack with which I play.

"This man, Kemp, left Japan before anything could be done to restrain him. His boat, the *Siberia*, sailed from Yokohama before we could manage to plant aboard her some one of our operatives who would have arranged matters to our satisfaction.

"And now he is but a day or so from San Francisco, and I see that your government has gone so far as practically to warn us publicly that we have no chance of handling him. It was understood that he was to remain in San Francisco for several days on some work or the other, or perhaps to attend to some personal affairs. Which, we do not know; only the fact he was to be here for at least two days.

"We judged that time would be ample for our purpose until, this morning, we read this in all the newspapers. Evidently it was made out in quadruplicate and sent to each paper by the Intelligence Officer for the San Francisco area at the Presidio. At all events it is official, and here it is."

He had folded over a prominent first-page column of the most conservative morning journal in the city. She read:

"MILITARY SPY WELL-GUARDED

"Captain Oliver Kemp to Be Watched Night and Day by Squads of Intelligence Police During Stay in City

"RETALIATION FEARED

"Greatest Precautions to Be Taken in Case of Returning U. S. Army Officer Who Rounded Up Vladivostok Reds"

She read no more than the headlines. It was unnecessary, he seemed to think, for his thumb covered the following lines, and he tossed the paper aside when she read the headlines.

"You understand now why it is that persons like myself, bearing dubious reputations with the Federal authorities, would find it unprofitable and extremely perilous, to say the least, even to attempt an interview with Captain Kemp. That article there goes on to say that Captain Kemp will be welcomed back to America by a quota of officers from the Presidio, including the brigadier-general (retired) responsible for Kemp's appointment as an army officer. This quota of officers will meet him at the dock. He will be in their charge most of the day; an official luncheon at the Presidio, a dinner at the St. Francis, and a number of pleasant activities are chronicled. During that time you must manage to make his acquaintance."

"I? You must be insane. I——"

"If that is your final word," the man with the red tie said sternly, "I will take my leave, to wire Moscow that the sister is as stubborn as the brother and that there is no need to postpone the execution so far as this branch of the Brotherhood is concerned."

He had taken up his soft sombrero and seemed about to put his threat into execution. His hand was on the knob, the door was open, one foot had crossed the threshold, when, with a wild cry, the girl sprang after him.

He seemed unconscious of her action, for he took the second step outside, and the door in the act of closing would have collided with her body had she not grasped it firmly.

Only then did he turn, and then only as if to correct some unforeseen obstacle in closing the door. They stood face to face with but a few inches separating their eyes.

At such close quarters they tried to study one another. But only one pair of eyes repaid the effort—the girl's. They had lost all signs of indecision now; lost, too, was the bedazed look, the air of one groping in a fog of mental doubt. Over all lay a mist of tears.

"You mustn't go! Not if you mean to send any such message. How can I know that what you tell me is true? About Dick, I mean?"

"I had anticipated such an objection and came prepared for it. When we first decided we could make use of you I wired Moscow to give the prisoner Orlob Pulaski (that is the name your brother goes by there) the right to send you a good-by message. I told them to let it seem that this message was smuggled out by some friendly warder. I also advised that the person who was to play the part of the friend should tell your brother to couch his message to you in some familiar childhood terms, so that you would know it came from him and understand *multum in parvo*, so to speak.

"That message," he concluded, after a pause, "is here!"

He handed her a folded piece of notepaper. She opened it.

"The first line," he explained, "was how it came to us in code. Everything must be decoded first into the Slavic, which is the second line. The third is the English translation, of which I can make nothing. Nor my friends. Your brother must have obeyed quite literally the suggestions of 'his friend.'"

She took the message and read it.

With the sound of a helpless animal in pain she laid her cheek against the paper, meanwhile rocking herself to and fro.

He waited. Matters looked propitious. He had all the infinite patience of the Slav who can wait a seeming eternity if there is an end to be gained.

He could well imagine what was passing

in her mind. The dismal prison cell with its one window high up in the heavy masonry, a slit too small to be called a window, and barred at that. An opening door, a soldier on guard at each side of it, officer handing the prisoner a written communication, the prisoner bowing his head.

And then: the open courtyard, the tramp, tramp across the great blocks of stone that paved it, the right-about-face of the guards, leaving the prisoner with his back to a blank wall, an advancing officer who held a handkerchief with which to bind the coatless man who stood alone, a retreating officer, a kneeling squad with its carbines pointed at the blindfolded figure standing, a speaking officer.

"Fire!"

He could have told you the exact second when that last incident in the picture was reeled off before her mind, could have told by the sudden start, the clenched hands, the wild look of distress. And he could have prophesied quite truly that, in another second, those eyes would harden, those hands would twist themselves into hard fists, the woman's head would bend and she would regard him, distrustfully but expectantly, from beneath knitted eyebrows, saying the while:

"If I do this for you, what assurance have I that my brother will be set free?"

CHAPTER TWO

CONCERNING CERTAIN MYSTERIOUS PASSENGERS

IT is a privilege vouchsafed no other class of men, save those of the customs, the Secret Service and reporters, that of being the first to follow the quarantine officials up the accommodation ladder of our incoming great ocean greyhounds. Yet a stranger got aboard of the government cutter that went out to meet the incoming steamer *Siberia*. None of the crew had the least idea who he was, or how or why he happened to be there. Even that most astute sleuth, Detective-Lieutenant Bill Chambers, who had had charge of this branch of the local Scotland Yard for a good many years and who knew almost everything about almost everybody likely to be connected with sleuthing, was utterly at sea as far as the stranger's identity was concerned.

Certainly he did not look like the sort of man likely to be carrying the nucleus of a "big story" in his reason for being aboard. Yet every one knew that it was more than difficult for a stranger to get aboard that cutter for that trip on ordinary days. Judge, then, how much more difficult it must have been on this day when extra-special precautions were being taken against strangers on account of the "Kemp story."

"We'll keep our eyes on him, anyhow," agreed one of the reporters.

Young Marmaduke of the *Chronicle*, to whom had been detailed the assignment of keeping an eye upon him, was chagrined and hurt in the worst possible way—in a matter of professional pride, for after a while "Andrew Laurie" had suddenly vanished. That much, and that only, he knew about the mysterious passenger: that his name was Andrew Laurie. Nay, he knew not even that; only that the astute Bill Chambers, who was a nosey soul as befitted his profession, had, by placing himself in close proximity to the cutter's captain, seen the pass which the mysterious stranger had extended when first seen approaching from the pier.

Inquiry proved equally useless. After half an hour or more of it young Marmaduke, dejected and disgusted, had rejoined his companions to report failure. But, finding them equally sunk in similar states of mind, he refrained from immediately declaring the reasons for his own.

"What's trouble?" he desired to know.

"Our biggest story gone floocy, that's all," replied the dean of the ship-news men as he spat over the side in a manner that combined the seaman-like with the intensely annoyed.

"Little tin-pot captain won't see us; rich, ain't it?" demanded another who had himself achieved the rank he spoke of during the late bickering of nations. "We, whom generals haven't been too big to ask to 'have a bite' with them, we can't be seen by a two-by-four captain. What I call rich!"

"You mean Kemp?" asked young Marmaduke incisively.

"No, I mean Lemp," retorted the ex-soldier brusquely, the habit of disciplining still strong within him.

"The general idea is that Kemp has retired to his stateroom, has been living a retired life there, in fact, ever since our cutter was sighted, having sent up word to the purser that under no circumstances could he see any newspaper men. "And that," added the ironist bitterly, "is what our city editors are depending upon for a play-up, double-spread star local story, space unlimited, write it for all it will stand."

No bulldog ever took firmer grip of a wanderer's pantaloons than a reporter takes hold of an evasive news story. They knew that Kemp *must* quit his cabin when the ship docked, and they knew he could not leave it meanwhile. For they had all boarded the *Siberia* and had left Angel Island in their wake and were moving up through the Golden Gate with the shadow of Mount Tamalpais upon them. They were headed straight for the great Pacific Mail steamship pier, towed by two chubby, chunky and snorty little tugs.

Meanwhile, during his performance of his allotted share of investigation and inquiry, and just before the vessel came in sight of the packed pier, young Marmaduke had a sudden elusive hope. He caught sight of a back that he thought he had lost forever.

Or, at least, he thought he caught sight of such a back—the back of Mr. Andrew Laurie. He saw it from some distance, but he thought it unmistakable. The back in question was clad in one of those loose-fitting, belted country tweeds which can be done to perfection only by Scotch or Irish tailors working in the original peat-perfumed, hand-woven material.

Now, this back and the back of the mysterious passenger were seemingly one. So, with scant regard for the distinguished passenger, young Marmaduke strode up to the back in question and, hardly knowing what he did, smote it.

"Well, Mr. Laurie, so here we are ag——"

As the man turned he revealed an utterly different face to the one that should have gone with that back.

"Yes?" this stranger half-answered young Marmaduke, who gave back a step and put one hand to a perspiring forehead.

A second since it had not been perspiring at all. But that space of time had given its owner two shocks. First of all, it wasn't Laurie. And, second of all, it was Laurie. Some one named Laurie. That is, if one might judge by the way he had accepted the name.

The odd start, the swing on his heel, the involuntary right-about-face of this stranger was the sort he would have expected in such a case.

But the reporter's surprise was too great for him to follow any subsequent sequences of emotions; so he failed to see that the man addressed had become aware of his mistake at precisely the same second that the reporter became flabbergasted by it.

"Yes?" the man repeated, his tone the kindly one used to children in distress. Marmaduke noted resentfully that he seemed to think that he, Marmaduke, had applied to him for some sort of assistance.

"Why——" began young Marmaduke. That was the second or third time he had begun futile sentences that way on this "jinx" morning. His resentment grew.

"Can I assist you in any way?" the man continued, after a slight pause, of which the fuming Marmaduke took no advantage.

The reporter could stand it no longer.

"Look here," he demanded, breaking all rules for interviewers. "Are you Laurie, or aren't you?"

"Yes, my name is Laurie," was the mildly surprised reply. "I thought you knew that. You addressed me by my name."

"See here, Mr. Laurie," said the reporter in quiet desperation, but altering his previous tone to one of great humility and helplessness, "won't you do a fellow a favor and give him a hint as to what all this mystery about you means?"

"Before I *can* explain, you *must*," answered the other in that same kindly tone that the reporter had grown to loathe; it made him feel such a fool. "Just what is it that doesn't seem clear to you?"

"You!" was Marmaduke's straightforward answer. "And your namesake in the

cutter who wore the same overcoat you're wearing now. And who disappeared five minutes after he came aboard, although I was trailing him from the moment he stepped aboard."

"Looks as though you needed some lessons in 'trailing,' doesn't it? Well, I'm sorry I can't help you there."

His lean, quizzical face, with the smiling, youthful eyes, seemed to be in the grasp of a silent paroxysm.

"I don't think so much of that joke, Mr. Laurie," retorted Marmaduke sullenly. "Don't forget I didn't know the man I mistook for you, or I'd have acted quite differently. I was just keeping my eye on him casually."

"Why?" If Marmaduke could have known how much the answer to this lightly spoken question meant, he would have doffed his hat and bowed very low, acknowledging he had met his many-times master.

For it was asked in an airy fashion, lighter than thistle-down.

"Why? Why, so I could get a hint as to the mystery about him. That's why they let us ship-news men aboard ahead of everybody else, isn't it?"

So? He was only a reporter. The lean, quizzical face and the smiling eyes showed no signs of it, but, had the involuntary reflexes been working then, their owner would have heaved a heavy sigh of relief.

"How was I to know that your namesake knew that was what I was after and was bent on foiling me?"

"Good old word, 'foil.' Haven't heard it since the popular taste in 10-20-30 melodrama took a turn for the better."

All the resentful Mr. Marmaduke's faculties told him the second Mr. Laurie was having a gay old time with him. Mr. Laurie was, with infinite pains and considerable solicitude, endeavoring to find out just how much little Marmaduke knew, or how much he suspected, or vice versa, or both.

And he was using for that purpose all the art and craft that he had gained in years of experience at a game compared with which the art of extracting information in an interview was as a child's puzzle compared to the intricacies of differential calculus.

"You can laugh——"

"Don't you envy me for being able to?"

Marmaduke's resentfulness was gradually giving way to grudging admiration.

"Frankly, if you're mixed up with something as complicated as I suspect, I do!"

"Why should you suspect anything? You never saw me before, nor heard of me. Why should I be suspected of being mixed up with anything, complicated or no, outside my own personal affairs?"

"Why, then?" interrogated the reporter in his turn, "should you be wearing exactly the same overcoat, and, now that I notice it, the same necktie and suit of clothes?"

He paused, waiting for Laurie to affirm or deny.

"And the same hat," the reporter added, "undoubtedly the same hat! You couldn't miss that hat, Mr. Laurie."

No comment, only the same smiling, quizzical gaze, the same kindly, insufferably kindly, tolerant smile.

"And, certainly, the same name," Marmaduke climaxed. But it was a crestfallen climax, for it got him nowhere. This fellow did not seem either annoyed or alarmed at the extent of the other's information.

"Well?"

"Well, yourself, Mr. Laurie."

"Why, yes, tolerably well, thank you—to revive the sort of jest that used to go with the villain's use of the word 'foiled,' you know; the sort of comicality that was 'pulled' in the 'front scenes' before the drop while the bigger scenes were being set."

"Not that you're that sort of a comedian, Mr. Laurie," admitted Marmaduke, the grudging admiration apparent. "Your style is drawing-room comedy, my dear sir, and damn well you do it. And do *me!* You're not, by any chance, going to do anything *for* me, then?"

"Gladly, if I can. For instance——"

"For instance, produce that other Mr. Laurie who came aboard in the same coat——"

"Same sort of coat, don't you mean?" asked his interpellator with a gentle smile.

"I'm hanged if I know just what I do

mean after five minutes' conversation with you, Mr. Laurie," answered Marmaduke frankly. "You ought to have been a reporter."

"Maybe I have been."

The other shook his head. "I'd have heard of you. Reporters of your caliber—you'd be the special correspondent brand now—don't go unrecognized in the pencil-pushing game. No!"

"Thanks for the compliment. Sorry I can't do anything for you."

"Then you won't produce the other one who wore—the same *sort* of coat? And hat?"

"Not *won't—can't!*"

Without anything to go on, the young reporter took his leave, lifting his hat as he did so. The other responded with a polite foreign gesture. Evidently he was accustomed to raising his hat in farewell to his fellows.

Had he known how little accustomed Marmaduke was to doing so he would have realized the extent of the implied compliment.

"Au 'voir," said the second Mr. Laurie.

"You're right with that *au 'voir,'* " Marmaduke muttered. "You know I'm not going to let you out of my sight without knowing something more about you, my friend. Well, you know it? But you won't have as easy a time getting away as your double did. Whatever this story is, I'm going to keep after it until I get it. And I'll bet it'll be a lulu."

It was. But he, alas! never got it. No one ever could, in its full ramifications, until the inscrutably smiling Mr. Laurie chose they should.

Showing by no visible sign that he was either elated or disconcerted by his recent interview—for it had been an interview, although the would-be interviewer had not known it—Andrew Laurie waited until he saw out of the tail of his eye that young Marmaduke had betaken himself beyond a point where he could be cognizant of his, Laurie's, movements.

Then, but with a weather-eye out for any other weather—eyes that might be watching him—Mr. Andrew Laurie made his way to the saloon deck. Once there, within seeing distance of his destination, he quickened his pace slightly.

Then he stepped within a door giving access to an alleyway, and traversed the same. But, this time, swiftly. And even more swiftly he passed out of the alleyway and, by another door, gained the deck again, or rather a view of it.

It was still deserted. He looked back within. Also deserted. For packing had been all over for some time and the passengers' luggage had long since been carried from the cabins by the stewards.

One stateroom at that moment contained the most important person of all those aboard.

Important to whom? Well, to the United States Government, for one.

But *most* important to a certain Miss Gerda Grahame. For he represented to her her last chance of ever seeing her brother again.

The cabin of Captain Kemp was not deserted; very far from it. And it was his cabin that Mr. Laurie approached, now that he had no witnesses, and upon whose door he knocked peculiarly, a rat-a-tat that could not be mistaken for an ordinary knock. Evidently a signal, for without any investigation the door opened.

And, had young Marmaduke been there to see, his eyes would have been gratified by the sight of the rather insignificant and unimportant face of him whom he knew as the "first Mr. Laurie," the former wearer of the coat now draped upon the person of the second Mr. Laurie.

The mysterious passenger of the cutter was now arrayed in the uniform of a captain, general staff, U. S. A.

In fact, he was the one everybody seemed so concerned about—Captain Oliver Kemp, Siberian Expeditionary Force.

CHAPTER THREE

GERDA GETS TO WORK

WITH the swiftness of a prestidigitator performing a disappearing trick Laurie got inside the room. Standing with his back to the door while he turned

the key in the lock, he faced the shrinking Kemp.

"What in God's name is wrong?" gasped that gentleman. "Found out?"

"No, not yet. But there's an infernal newspaper man who has his suspicions. What did you wear so conspicuous a coat and hat for? Look at them! Exclusive pattern Harris tweeds. Hamburg hat to match, made out of the same material as the coat, with guards' buckle at the back instead of rosette at the side. No one could miss a hat and coat like that. It's a wonder you didn't wear a Zingari tie, or your school colors, or something equally identifying. Why didn't you carry a fire-gong to make sure?"

At each word Kemp shrank back a little farther, until, being able to shrink no more, he dropped into the cushioned wicker chair beneath the locked and shuttered deck window.

"What does the reporter suspect?"

"Nothing, precisely. He just smells a story. And you know their accursed 'nose for news'——"

"But why?"

"Because, as you ought to know from the difficulty you had in getting that pass, nobody is allowed aboard that cutter except newspaper men and Government officials. And, as you certainly do know better than I, they are making things extra-special difficult for any one to get within reaching distance of 'Captain Kemp' without giving an account of themselves. Now, as no one aboard that boat knew you, they realized that you must have some extremely urgent business to be allowed access to this ship while 'Kemp' was aboard and before the plans for his protection could be put into effect. The fact that you had the pass was sufficient for the detectives and operatives; they knew whom you had to see to get it. But it's different with the newspaper men; the fact of your having seen the person you did have to see only made your business here the more important to them, for it meant a mystery story.

"And, then, to have you disappear somewhere into the bowels of the ship and not be seen again, even though one of their number had been detailed to watch you."

"Was he a young chap with a Cardigan sweater for a waistcoat?" asked the one known as 'Captain Kemp,' a gleam of amusement irradiating his worry. Laurie nodded. "Well, you know, I had an idea he was showing a little too much interest in my movements, so——"

"Oh, I dare say you were extremely clever," broke in Laurie ironically. "But we haven't time to listen to the way you gave him the slip. Sufficient to say you did. The point now occurs: *How* are you to *go on* doing it?"

Immediately he who was to be welcomed as the secret agent *par excellence,* the military spy without a peer, became as helpless as any ordinary civilian. He spread his hands.

"Lord, Lord!" groaned Laurie. "Why hast thou given thy servant such a bonehead? Look here, laddie!"

With quick decision he threw open a neatly packed kit-bag and took therefrom several flat, weather-proofed black cases that unfolded somewhat after the manner of pocket lunch-boxes. One of these revealed compartments in which lay false hair in various shapes. The other held make-up pencils and cosmetics.

"Sit there, and I'll sit here." With the aid of a squeeze-tube of gum arabic and a pair of extremely keen scissors, Laurie snipped and pasted, until Kemp's face was provided with something very neat in the way of capillary face fittings—a small, foreign-looking mustache and imperial.

"Now, let's see," meditated Laurie, his swift and accurate fingers digging in and out of a third flat box containing wigs. He selected and trimmed one, then, having previously directed "Kemp" to plaster his hair down to the smallest compass, drew it over that person's scalp.

Kemp now sat revealed as a Slavic-looking young student of the gymnasium—say, possibly an arch-leader of "intellectuals," one of the "intelligentzia," if one did not examine his eyes and air more than cursorily. Mustache, Napoleon-wisp, and hair to match, cut *en brosse* (or "in the brush," to

translate literally); all these submerged his none too striking personality. A line or two from the make-up pencils, done within the natural curves and creases of the face, completed the metamorphosis.

"There, I flatter myself that will fool my young friend, the reporter." Laurie sighed with satisfaction as he handed over a small mirror.

"But," gasped Kemp, "not even this general will recognize me, fixed this way, and the very reason for my being here is made useless.

"Lord, Lord, why dost thou persecute me?" asked Laurie of the ceiling lamp. "Grant that I may not slay this nut. Make it a closed season, oh Lord, upon the cases of arrested development among the young and weak-minded. Spare the half-wits, oh Lord of Hosts!"

"That's all very clever," snarled the other. "But suppose you tell me what to do?"

"Wouldn't the recognition by General Luders be first due to your voice? Is that changed? Secondly, wouldn't it be due to your recalling to him incidents and accidents that only you would be likely to remember—people and places, and so forth? And finally, isn't it the easiest thing in the world to remove the wig for a moment?"

Laurie suited the deed to the word by peeling it off with one quick, deft movement of his almost prehensile fingers.

"There you are!" he concluded. "And there—and there!" And, disregarding his subject's muffled squeals, he gave two quick jerks, so expert they did not ruffle a hair, and the mustache and imperial lay alongside the beard. "Simply add the tiniest bit of gum-arabic and resume them. That is, after you've greeted the general and been recognized by him. Now, while I'm gone, cast your eyes over these notes. Be very careful of that note-book and only read the pages I've marked in blue pencil. Here's the code. That's in case they should ask you questions. Of course, I'll be here as much as I can, right by your side, or as near to it as I can get to keep you from making any more bulls than you can help. Well, I'm off. Don't open that door unless you get my signal, and don't forget that this exchange of personalities is for my safety."

He paused at the threshold, shaking his head despondently.

"Cultivate an air of command, for the dear Lord's sake. Remember who you are—Oliver Kemp."

"I'm only too well aware of that," responded the other dolefully.

"Oh, forget that Kemp. I mean the new Kemp—the Kemp who, single-handed, rounded up the Vladivostock Reds; the Kemp who brilliantly disproved all the early prophecies of his friends and acquaintances, that a mother's spoiled darling could come to no good. That's the Kemp I want you to remember you are."

"It's not so easy as saying it," grumbled the other. "I'm not up to it, remember that."

"It's a blamed sight easier than what you'll have to do if a certain little something ever gets to the knowledge of the Chief I. O., my little friend," Laurie reminded him grimly. "So you'd best buck up and think yourself particularly well off until you've got the chance to resign from the service. You're still under military orders now; you forget that sometimes, don't you?"

Kemp was trembling visibly. "I wish I'd never come on the cutter," he whined.

"Any time your motives aren't selfish you're asleep," growled Laurie. "If you had the proper feeling of a titmouse you'd be grateful for all I've done for you."

"Done for me?" ejaculated Kemp, with a wild laugh.

"Done for you, yes. Isn't it the first time your name has ever served for anything except a text to show how worthless the sons of rich men are?"

A glance through the flanges of the closed shutter suddenly recalled to the speaker the fact that they were within an ace of being alongside the great pier, the glance having been prompted by the confused sound of shouting that was borne in to the occupants of the closed and shuttered room.

"Well, we're off," said Laurie lightly, in marked contrast to the other's demeanor, which was one of settled and somewhat ap-

prehensive sullenness. "I'm off to get your officers; you're off to play your part, for the ship's in. So-long. And good luck," he added as he shot the bolt. "Stand ready to close it instantly as I pass out."

He did so, in the minimum of space, the other obeying his instructions so implicitly that the closing door narrowly escaped shaving his ear and pinning the Homburg hat.

Laurie got himself out of the vicinity of Kemp's cabin with the same celerity he had shown when getting himself into it. But once above that deck, he resumed his attitude of unimpeachable ease. He had intentionally come out on the port side of the promenade deck, where he pushed his way to the rail for a long enough time to identify a little group of uniformed officers who stood in a place of preference, roped off from the crowd in general, along with officials of the company and others having particularly important reasons for being there.

Laurie noted casually that among these was an extremely pretty girl; all the prettier, as pretty girls generally are, for her manish uniform. Her coiled blond hair was wound tightly about her small head so as to accommodate it to a jaunty Serbian cap, blue braided and bearing her insignia and the initials of her arm of the service; at least so Laurie judged from the glittering gilt specks that caught the sun.

He was not particularly interested in the girl. He only wondered what her presence among the other uniforms portended.

"I suppose people like that will go on wearing those uniforms until they wear out," he thought, grinning amusedly. "Any excuse for dragging them out and putting them on again is good enough. And it'll go on forever and a day whenever a woman wants some special privilege she can get better in uniform than out of it. That woman hasn't any more right to be wearing a uniform, now the war is two years dead, and the reason for giving her the right to wear it is over."

But he was wrong about the girl and her right to be in uniform. This particular woman's right had been won by hard years of service at some of the most unpleasant and altogether undesirable tasks that were, however, positively necessary to an army's well-being.

For her corps was the W. A. A. C.'s and her name was Gerda Grahame. And, although his first glance at her was, as we have said, quite cursory, her first glance at him was anything but that. For, as the gangway was being raised into place and she saw him leaning far over to the rail at one side, endeavoring to attract the attention of one or all of her uniformed companions, her sharpened instincts became acutely aware of the probability that, if this were not Kemp himself, it was some one who bore a message from him.

Else why should he attempt to signal any one of the officers?

"I beg your pardon, colonel," she said, reading the nearest officer's collar insignia, "but——"

She touched his arm, indicating the signaling one, who, now that he saw the officer looking up, first saluted in regulation style, then resumed his signaling.

"He's using the scout deaf-and-dumb signaling, the sort our war office approved for transmitting orders under gas attacks—you know, before we got any adequate masks that made speech possible," she explained. "And—do you see what he's saying?"

"Why—er—no—er—Captain," smiled the ancient beau she had addressed, noting the three "pips" embroidered on her sleeve. "It is 'captain,' isn't it?"

"Yes," she answered impatiently. "Can't you see what he's saying? Or do you want to know, sir?"

She brought the last out as a concession to discipline, not because she felt courteous in the least. His gallantry to her as one of her sex, instead of the frank brotherliness of one officer to another, was annoying in the extreme to Gerda Grahame, who was anything but a toy-soldieress and did not relish being treated as one.

"Well, then," she conceded when, somewhat abashed by her reception of his gallantry, the colonel acknowledged his need for information, "he's telling you to come up the gangway as soon as it is lowered and

he will lead the way to Captain—Captain Somebody's cabin."

"Not Captain Kemp's, by any chance?" broke in an eager, alert-looking man of her own rank, the youngest there.

"Wait; he's repeating it. I've got it plainer. He doesn't want you to attract any particular attention by greeting him, he says. Just come up as if you knew where you were going, but keep him in sight. He's not going to signal any more," she concluded as Laurie turned away. "He says people are crowding down the stairways to that deck and he doesn't wish to attract too much attention. Those are not the exact words, you know," she broke off to explain. "I'm just giving you his meaning."

"But was it Kemp?" demanded the alert-looking captain.

"No, my dear young friend," broke in the sonorous voice of an old man, speaking in measured cadences, "that is not Oliver Kemp. Even at this distance I can assure you that is not Oliver. I, myself, and I alone, am responsible for the appointment of Captain Kemp, my dear young lady."

"I didn't mean was the person speaking Kemp, if you will pardon me, General Luders," broke in the other captain, trying not to appear impatient. "I merely asked the young lady——"

"If you would oblige me by calling me 'Captain Grahame,'" Gerda corrected, with some asperity. "As you may see by my service stripes, it is a rank I have earned and am therefore entitled to, especially from brother officers."

They took the rebuke with a good grace, all save the old general, who might have been heard to mutter something about "he thought all that sort of fol-de-rol ended with the war. Time the army was through being played with." But she decided that his age and the beliefs of a past generation protected him, and ignored this.

"If you want to know whether or not I made out the name 'Kemp' in that signaling," she went on more graciously, "I'll have to admit that I didn't. I can only say that, from his manner of signaling, he expected you to know the name to which he was referring, and understand what he meant," she added as an afterthought. "It was all purely perfunctory, or so it seemed, all except the one point, that he didn't wish to be identified, not immediately at all events, with you. And that he wished you to follow him without attracting attention if possible."

The gangway had been pushed through the crowd and was being raised to the lower deck level as she spoke.

"Right up the gangway, gentlemen," called the deckmaster, "and ladies," he added a little uncertainly as he noted Gerda's sex.

"I have a pass," said Gerda to the colonel and fluttered an official-looking P. M. S. S. scrap, which stated that, as relieving officer, specially detailed, to assist returning Anzacs, sick or disabled, Captain G. Grahame, W. A. A. C., H. M. F., was entitled to any special privileges the Pacific Mail could extend her, and requested all in its employ to do all it could in the way of extending them.

"Oh, that's quite understood," he nodded, and with somewhat labored gallantry: "Your appearance is your passport, my dear captain," and he gave her a courtly hand to assist her ahead of him up the gangway.

Thus it came about that Gerda Grahame, who should have been the last one to be admitted aboard the *Siberia*, actually was the first.

But she did not attempt to strain her luck.

"I thank you for your assistance, captain," the colonel said, stopping the party as she paused to let them pass. "And I hope, if you are by way of visiting the Presidio, that you will look me up for a guide. Colonel Elwes Courtright, of the general's staff. Meanwhile I bid you good-day, captain."

"Oh, we may meet again before we leave the boat," she returned, laughing. "I have business aboard it, too, you know."

And so, smiling, they passed her, following the trail of Mr. Andrew Laurie, who had paused, somewhat annoyed, while the colonel made his adieux—a pause that had not failed to take the attention of the watchful Marmaduke, who, as the *Siberia* began

to dock, had once more taken him under observation.

"I wish I knew who he was," murmured Miss Grahame, not knowing she spoke aloud.

She was utterly taken aback to hear, almost at her ear:

"So do I." And she turned to face young Marmaduke.

"Who do you mean?" she demanded before she realized that she was addressing a stranger.

"Mr. Andrew Laurie," was his gloomy reply, "the fellow who's leading them to Kemp's cabin. I guess he thought he was the only person who knew that kind of scout signaling. Well, he wasn't. I was in the signal service myself, and I learned everything from heliographing down—or up, as the case might be."

"And who is Mr. Andrew Laurie?" she asked, trying to keep her excitement from showing.

"I wish I knew," was the morose reply as Marmaduke strode away, head down, hands in pocket. "But I'll get him yet," he told himself fiercely. "I'll get him yet, if I have to give up all my other work to do it. No man can make that kind of a monkey out of me and get away with it."

He did not realize it, but there was one man who could!

CHAPTER FOUR

LAURIE GIVES THE PASSWORD OF "THE BROTHERHOOD"

GERDA would have scorned to use the lure of sex for any purpose of her own. But this was different; it was for Dick. She had just two days in which to save his life. And if this man Laurie knew Kemp so well that the latter trusted him sufficiently to use him as a go-between, it was imperative that she know as much about Laurie as there was to know. Thinking the reporter could help her, she followed him and asked the young fellow to tell her all he knew about Laurie.

When Marmaduke had concluded the tale of his disappointment that morning, Gerda had every reason to congratulate herself on her astuteness.

"You mean to tell me, then, that this man Laurie is the only person Kemp has seen since he left Yokohama?" she demanded excitedly; "the only one?"

"That's what the purser says; he hasn't even seen Kemp himself—or the room steward, or the dining-room steward, or the bath steward." Thus the morose Marmaduke. "I've been making a few inquiries since I took up Laurie's trail, and I just caught him coming out of Kemp's cabin. The captain of the *Siberia* had his orders direct from naval intelligence; he's a U. S. N. R. man himself, you know—commanded a transport during the war. Well, as far as I can gather from the purser, those orders were that the fewer people who knew Kemp by sight the better. Until he got to Washington and turned over some startling information he had to the higher authorities, there was every reason to believe there would be attempts made to detain him. Now Kemp, by a series of disguises, had managed to fool almost everybody into thinking he was somebody else."

"Yes, yes," she said impatiently. "What you want me to gather is that practically nobody on the voyage out recognized or became acquainted with this Kemp, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," returned the ruffled reporter. "You asked me and I was trying to tell you. But if you want to tell it yourself—— Oh, all right, then. Well, the S. E. F. had been in possession of Vladivostock some time when Kemp came in to report to the Chief personally at a time he was alone. The chief needed an I. O. whom nobody knew; the Reds had their own Secret police, and mighty good ones, and so it was mostly checkmate. So the Chief whipped Kemp away from the office, joined him at a hotel, gave him his orders, arranged for a means of communication, and—presto!—that was all anybody saw of Kemp officially."

"You mean Kemp transmitted all his information in some secret manner, but stayed away from H. Q. personally, is that it?"

"Yes, it is," returned Marmaduke in the same dogged manner. But to it was now added a certain surprise. "Say, Miss Grahame, you'll pardon me, but everybody in the world seems to be mixed up with this Kemp thing this morning——"

"No, no," she interrupted hurriedly. "I have my own reasons, but they are imperative—really imperative, and confidential, Mr. Marmaduke. I hope you'll not tell any one I questioned you about Captain Kemp. I wouldn't have if I hadn't known you some time and known all about you. You see"—she tapped her uniform, then her insignia—"I'm under orders, too."

Marmaduke whistled reflectively. "British, of course. Yes, they'd be interested, even more interested than our people in protecting the source of so much Siberian subterranean information as Kemp represents. And a woman, of course, could give him a sort of protection any number of men might miss. I see! Trust me, Miss Grahame," he added ingratiatingly.

For the first time since he left the cutter he smiled. Gerda, not overpleased that she should have unwittingly given him to believe she was on official business, made no reply, but managed to force a smile that matched his own.

And as she had particularly small and even teeth, and her lips had the cherry-red of perfect health, and her mouth was ridiculously small, even for a woman's, a smile from her was one that was worth having. For the moment therefore Marmaduke forgot he was a wronged and embittered journalist, and warmed to his work of assisting her.

"Yeah, that was the way it happened," he agreed. "And all the while Kemp was on the payroll of the Reds, drawing down quite some B. R. for acting as a 'civilian informer,' I believe they call it. He'd even framed one or two affairs (with his Chief's assistance) that resulted in the Reds getting all sorts of misleading information and some half a dozen unimportant prisoners. Oh, they had every confidence in him. He must be a lulu, this Kemp."

"Yes, yes; I quite agree," Gerda again interrupted. "We're all agreed on that point, I mean. But about no one having seen him during the voyage?"

"Oh, yes; well, long before he was detached and ordered home the S. E. F. was over. You know that Siberian business never was popular back here. But Kemp and, I've heard it whispered, a few others among the I. O.'s and I. P.'s and S. S. men generally, remained behind, not working against the Soviet government, you understand——"

Here Marmaduke gave her a wide and wily wink.

"——Oh, at least, so the army people are careful to explain to us newspaper men when such cases come up. No, no; perish the thought! But working against the same societies of incendiary and inflammatory Reds who are making trouble here. So——"

"But," Gerda insisted wearily, "now how about this Laurie?"

"Oh, yes; I was coming to him. Well, the S. E. F. being over, Kemp's Chief was gone from Vladivostock, and there was no one to recognize him there. So he got away without leaving any traces, and the counter-revolutionary people, using Kemp's information, jumped the Reds and rounded up the lot. And all the while Kemp, unidentified, was on his way to Japan.

"Well, the way I got it from the purser, instead of hot-footing it aboard the first homeward-bound ship as soon as he got to Nagasaki, Kemp goes inland all the way to Yokohama and waits until an hour before the *Siberia* is to leave the port, when he sends a jinrikisha coolie to the captain with a note from the Naval Intelligence Officer attached to the Tokio Legation. This note tells the captain what I told you.

"And that's the way it's gone. It seems he'd always have his bath when the steward was fixing up his room, and he'd always be in it when the dining-room steward brought his tray. And he has held no communication with a living soul, except this Laurie, who, it seems, came aboard at Honolulu, asked immediately for Kemp, so the purser says, and was shown directly to his cabin.

"When he got there—this comes from the

steward—he gave a peculiar kind of rat-a-tat-tat on the door and waited. The same kind of rat-a-tat-tat came in answer from the other side of the door, and Laurie ordered the steward to be on his way. As soon as he had gone Kemp admitted Laurie, and from that time on such messages as Kemp has had to send by wireless, or to the captain, or what not, have been sent by Laurie. He has even carried in trays to Kemp, and so forth and so on. So it looks very much as though Kemp had cabled for Laurie, or some one like him, before he joined the ship at Yokohama, doesn't it? And Laurie must have come on ahead of him to this country."

So engaged was young Mr. Marmaduke with his task of assisting fair maidenhood that he had forgotten the present for the past; that is, as far as Mr. Andrew Laurie was concerned, whom he was supposed to be trailing.

So, instead of Marmaduke trailing Laurie, it was Laurie who was trailing him; that gentleman having cocked a weather-eye in his direction from a distant door and seen him close in conversation in the shadow of the deserted ship's library, immediately betook himself within the library, and, with infinite caution, maneuvered his way beneath a window near which they stood. Had the window in question not been curtained the shadows of their two heads would have fallen athwart his as he sat crouching on the cushioned seat not three feet away.

In which position Laurie heard every word they exchanged.

"Now, I wonder," pondered Mr. Laurie silently, "just where this young lady comes in? Why this absorbing interest in Kemp? Something tells me," he further considered, "that she is going to go out of her way to make my acquaintance. And something else tells me that I am going to make it easy for her."

"Yes," Gerda was replying about this time, "it looks like he is either one of your M. I. men, or perhaps somebody from your Scotland Yard."

Her tone was a trifle disappointed.

"We haven't any Scotland Yard," Marmaduke corrected, "and if you mean Secret Service, no, I don't think so, because we had a S. S. man aboard the cutter who knows them all. And if one of these Lauries was S. S., the other would be, too, wouldn't he? If I thought it was just an open-and-shut case of guarding Kemp, I'd lay off; it's a point of honor with us ever since the late war not to do anything to give publicity to schemes the underground services want to keep quiet. But, again, if he was Military Intelligence, he would have been sent out from this base, wouldn't he? In which case he'd be familiar to old Colonel Courtright, who's the Chief Intelligence Officer here, or to young Captain Conway, who's the one who does all Courtright's work. But neither of them knew Laurie—you were standing here—did they?"

"They showed no signs of it," answered Gerda.

"There you are," triumphed Marmaduke. "Then the point comes up: Which one is Laurie? The one who had the cutter pass, or the one who came aboard at Honolulu? Must be two Lauries aboard, you know. Knowing how hard it is to get a cutter pass, I'd be willing to swear the other fellow is Laurie. If that's the case, who is this first fellow? And where is the Laurie whose overcoat he's wearing?"

"Why, you don't think," gasped Gerda, "that——"

"I don't know what to think. But just suppose by some strange twist this fellow here should have gotten hold of the other fellow's identification, joined this ship at Honolulu, passed himself off on Kemp as 'Laurie,' and got in his confidence. Then, suppose the real Laurie, who's been detailed to join Kemp in Honolulu, but missed the boat, comes aboard from the cutter this morning and is seen by the fake Laurie? What more natural than that he'd bump his head against the nearest bulkhead and pitch him overboard?"

"But why?" Gerda gasped her horror.

"Why? Why, good Lord, girl, haven't I been telling you—— I beg your pardon for that 'good Lord, girl,' stuff; I'm rattled this morning."

"You certainly are, young man," was the

grim, unspoken comment of the "fake Laurie" beneath the library window.

"But haven't I been telling you that these Reds want to get Kemp the very worst way?"

"No, you didn't exactly tell me. You just said they wanted to *identify* him," said Gerda."

"Too innocent by far," commented the listening Laurie. "Have to do better than that, little girl."

"Well, then, what would they want to identify him for, if it wasn't to get him," argued Marmaduke. "And they knew their last chance would be gone once he got to San Francisco. Meanwhile, if they could get a man into his confidence, learn all he intended to do and how he intended to do it."

"But if they knew their last chance was gone when Kemp got to San Francisco, why didn't this man take advantage of his intimacy to 'get him,' as you put it, before the ship docked?" inquired Gerda, whose heart was beating high with the hope that here might be a helper, and that therefore it was her duty to protect him as far as was possible.

"By golly, that's right, Miss Grahame," answered the discomfited Marmaduke. "But, then," he brightened, "this real Laurie coming aboard upset all his plans."

"Why didn't he 'get' Kemp, then, after he 'got' the real Laurie?" Gerda pursued remorselessly. "And why did he advertise what he had done to the real Laurie by wearing his hat and overcoat?"

"Well reasoned, young lady," applauded the silent listener. "If that boy had half your brains, he'd be a real reporter."

"That's true, too," agreed Marmaduke, his face lengthening. "Well, it's one too many for me just now, I'll admit. But I'm just as sure that there's a big story in it as I was, even if my theory doesn't seem to fit it. Well, I've got to be watching for Kemp. What are you going to do?"

She smiled mysteriously. "Meet Mr. Laurie."

"Which one?" Marmaduke laughed ruefully.

"Whichever one I see first," was her gay response. "Mind you don't tell any one I'm interested. I have your word of honor."

She had nothing of the sort, and she knew it. But it was chiefly important that he should think she had. He, however, seemed to show no sign of being sorry he had given it as he lifted his hat and went his way, calling back that he must see her before she left the boat.

It was about this time that Laurie decided on a bold move. But then most of his moves were bold, their very boldness throwing his enemies off their guard. In this particular case his reasoning was that, if this girl, whoever she was, was so interested in his movements, her presence there must presage some move in the game of which he was not cognizant. The fact that he was not made it look as though it were an enemy move. It therefore behooved him to become acquainted with it as soon as possible before the worst befall.

Now, at the present moment, a stray seed or so had been sown by Marmaduke which might give rise within her to the belief that he, too, Laurie, was working against Kemp. If he could get the girl to believe that, it was more than likely that she would make some attempt to get him to help her carry out her own plans.

And in order to do that she must give him enough of a clue as to what those plans were for him to reconstruct the rest—the part she did not tell him.

Which was most strenuously to be desired. Therefore, without waiting longer than it took Marmaduke to go below, Laurie worked his way around to the door through which Gerda would have to go if she went anywhere—within the ship, that is—and came out in full view of her.

Laurie waited for a brief space, watching the girl. He wanted particularly to see whether her business in any way concerned any of those who wore the same uniform as herself. But, save for the regulation salute (when proffered, in which case it was scrupulously returned), the girl paid not the slightest attention to any one, in uniform or out of it for that matter, but stood in the lee of the library staring straight across the

taffrail at the sunlit waters of the Golden Gate.

Assuredly appearances were in her favor. And yet appearances—as evidenced by her attitude to Marmaduke—were against her. Well, there was a short, quick, sharp way of settling the matter. It could do him no harm. The worst of it was, it could do her no good. But he was playing too stiff a game to let sentiment stand in his way.

With this mental reminder he stepped briskly into view, crossed the deck, stepped directly up to her, and, making a significant motion, said, his voice discreetly lowered:

"You are waiting for the message? It is *'Sola virtus invicta,'* and, although Latin, is signed in Russia: 'Nitchevic.' I am glad you are here. I hoped for one of the 'Brotherhood.'"

She staggered just a little, stepped back. But her face betrayed her.

(*Continued in next week's issue*)

ELECTRICAL THEFTS

CHARLES L. EIDLITZ, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Electrical Board of Trade of New York, announced recently that the electrical employees had begun a general round-up of crooked dealers and fences who have stolen $1,000,000 worth of electrical goods in the last year and have dumped them on the market at lower prices than those charged by reputable dealers.

The first result of the campaign was the arrest of five men, two in Jersey City and three in Manhattan, after the hold-up of a driver and the theft of a $7,000 truckload of electrical goods at 154th street and Eighth avenue. The driver of the truck was kidnapped at the point of a revolver, Mr. Eidlitz said, and delivered to his home with instructions not to "squeal," or he would be killed.

Mr. Eidlitz wrote to District Attorney Joab Banton of New York and Prosecuting Attorney John Milton of Hudson County, calling attention to the arrests and to other thefts of electrical goods.

The stolen truckload of goods was traced to a Jersey City garage, where it was divided. Part of it, according to the complaint in the case, was delivered to E. Leber Son & Co., electrical and plumbing supplies, 245 Newark avenue, Jersey City, and the remainder was called for by the truck of a New York electrical dealer. Leber and his son-in-law, Barret M. Epstein, were locked up in Jersey City on a charge of receiving stolen goods. Detectives Mullahey and Teed, under Captain Albert Mason of the Fortieth Precinct arrested three men, who were locked up in the Tombs on a charge of stealing the electrical goods.

"Ever since the Electrical Board of Trade of New York was organized last June complaints have been pouring in to the officers of that institution to the effect that large quantities of electrical goods of all kinds were finding their way into the market at prices which in nearly every instance were below the selling prices of the manufacturers who produced them," said Mr. Eidlitz. "Much of this material was of standard make and the product of some of the largest and most important companies in the East."

Marked For the Hangman

By ARTHUR SEYMOUR WITT

THERE was a great crowd in the courtroom of a Western State. Morbid curiosity was at its height, and every one was in suspense. The slightest incident caused a stir and sent a current of excitement through the audience.

An important verdict was expected any moment, and so the spectators eagerly waited, all eyes trained upon the door of the jury-room, from which the twelve men were expected to come with their momentous decision.

The case that had been tried was at once extraordinary and mysterious; extraordinary, in that it involved a great robbery, and because a long-sought-for criminal was the accused. Mysterious, because the tangle of circumstances brought out at the trial had been so complex and so confusing that the opposing testimonies seemed at one moment a monument to the accused man's innocence, only to be swept away in another instant by a torrent of powerful evidence that implied guilt.

So the stifling crime fans waited, silent, curious, expectant, hoping for a sensational turn, as morbid people do.

While the jury was deliberating and the crowd eagerly waiting, three men were conversing in a little chamber opposite the jury-room. They were the judge who had presided at the trial, the State's attorney, who had prosecuted the case, and Rudolph Hawk, the attorney of "Big Tim" Morrell, the accused.

They, too, were waiting for the verdict.

Hawk, who was a typical product of a large city's streets and slums, had imbibed all its vices and all its treachery. But, although thoroughly unprincipled, he possessed a remarkable native shrewdness that served him well in the shady enterprises to which he especially applied himself. His tactics were the shyster's tactics, his aim the miscarriage of justice.

Such, in short, was Rudolph Hawk, the hope of crime and the despair of morality.

The prosecuting attorney, Bennett, was growing decidedly nervous. He had counted upon a nearly verdict of guilty. Just why he had doped it out that way he probably didn't know himself. But he had entertained a strong hunch that the jury would either find the prisoner guilty in short order or else set him free. And already it had been deliberating for over an hour.

Hawk, on the other hand, had figured out matters differently. Immediately after the case had gone into the hands of the jury he told himself that if it were out long his client would surely be found guilty.

Another half-hour passed. The trio smoked and talked, expecting every minute to hear the bailiff announce that a verdict had been reached. The prosecuting attorney for the tenth time looked at his watch. He was more nervous than ever.

Rudolph Hawk smiled hopefully. But his smile was a lie. For he now felt absolutely certain that his case was lost. And already for the past half-hour his tricky mind had busied itself in searching for some loophole through which he would be able to get his client to freedom. He was thinking deeply, and finally a smile of confidence settled upon his smug face. He turned cheerfully to the prosecutor.

"Well, Bennett, it looks like an acquittal, after all," he lied blandly.

The other spat vexedly into a cuspidor.

"So it seems," he replied, somewhat irri-

tated. "But I would surely hate to see your man go free. He's got something coming to him, and he ought to get it. That's the way I look at it. Any one who admits, as he did upon cross-examination, that he's been on intimate terms with the murderer, Moxon, ought to be sent up."

Hawk smiled an oily smile.

The judge, who thus far had been a listless third party, now spoke up:

"This man Moxon—who is he, anyway?"

Bennett made a gesture toward the criminal attorney.

"Ask Hawk," he said curtly. "He knows all about the man. He can tell you the history of every crook in the country."

The shyster, instead of resenting this statement, felt flattered. He belonged to that breed of unethical lawyers who form the lowest strata of the legal profession. Every large city has them. They have a large acquaintance in gangster-land, and this familiarity with crooks of every calibre, from the habitual killer down to the cheap lush-toucher, is their capital and stock-in-trade. These human jackals derive a living from the outlawry of the community in which they live and prey.

"Well, you see," began Hawk, turning to the judge, "he's one of the most slippery yeggs that ever ripped a 'can' or flopped a 'bull.'" The lawyer was quite glib in the use of underworld lingo and always preferred to explain matters in that way, for he took not a little pride in his gangland vocabulary. "He's such a crafty killer that he's known from New York to Frisco. Yet no one seems to know what he looks like. He's a mystery, and always manages to escape the necktie parties that are planned for him."

He paused and blew out a cloud of smoke.

"He must have a clever lawyer, somebody like you, otherwise he would have received his deserts long ago," observed Bennett sarcastically.

"Well, supposing he has?" countered Hawk in a plaintive tone. "We criminal lawyers have got to make a living, haven't we? It's up to us to be always on the lookout, thinking up new ways of getting our clients off when everything seems dead against them."

And had either the judge or the prosecutor been nearly as foxy as the shyster, they might have detected a peculiar twinkle in Hawk's small, beady eyes. They might also have read something mischievous in the crafty smile that played for an instant about the shyster's mouth. And if by any chance they could have divined the train of intrigue that ran through his mind, they would have been astounded by the man's audacity.

For a moment there was silence.

"Anyway, it's hard to land Moxon."

"Why?" asked Bennett.

"He's too well-covered. The bulls can't throw him."

"Do you mean that he has a pull with the authorities?"

"No, no. It's because he keeps himself in the dark. But say, do you know it would make a name for the boy who could lay him by the heels? It would be some stunt."

Bennett was suddenly struck by an idea.

"By thunder!" he exclaimed, "I know it would mean the district attorneyship for me at the next election if I could land this murderer and send him to the hangman."

The judge could not repress a smile at the prosecutor's ambition.

"I shouldn't wonder," he observed, lighting a fresh cigar and glancing at his watch.

Rudolph Hawk now bent far forward in his chair as he turned toward Bennett.

"You said a while ago that my client, Morrell, knows Moxon quite well. Now, supposing I arrange matters so that Morrell brings Moxon into this court—turns state's evidence, let us say. In that case would you be willing to grant my client full freedom? Remember, he's only up for robbery, and the most that he can get is ten years, while the killer could 'be tried and convicted' in short order. What do you say?"

And again the shyster smiled that sneaky smile as he looked inquiringly from Bennett to the judge.

"Can such an agreement be made?" asked the prosecutor, turning to the judge.

The latter cleared his throat.

"Yes," he replied.

Bennett turned back to Rudolph Hawk.

"Do I understand that your client, whose case the jury is now debating, knows the whereabouts of this notorious killer?"

"He does," answered the shyster.

"And will he betray him if promised his freedom?"

"Yes; I can easily arrange the whole affair," said Rudolph Hawk.

"And I understand," resumed the prosecuting attorney, "that this murderer is marked for the gallows and can easily be identified, if caught, by a flaming lizard that is tattooed upon his bald head."

The shyster made a swift gesture, his eyes narrowed and a peculiar light suddenly gleamed in them.

"Bunk! Nothing to it!" he ejaculated.

"It seems to me," remarked the judge thoughtfully, "that I, too, vaguely remember having heard something about this 'Flaming Lizard.'"

"Nothing to it, I tell you," reiterated Rudolph Hawk. "Rumor—all idle talk. Must have been started by some fool reporter. If you give 'Big Tim' a chance to turn Moxon over to you, you'll see for yourselves how foolish the idea is."

The judge shrugged his shoulders; Bennett said nothing.

"But let's get down to business," said the shyster, changing the subject. He put his pencil behind his ear, spread a sheet of paper before him, and turned to the judge. "Bennett seems willing to grant my client his freedom if he turns state's evidence. Are you prepared to give your sanction to such an agreement?"

But before the judge could answer an involuntary gasp broke from the lips of the prosecuting attorney. Both the judge and Hawk turned quickly toward him. They found him looking confusedly toward the judge, a look of astonishment upon his face.

"What's the matter?" questioned the judge.

"Nothing," replied the prosecutor; "nothing at all." He seemed somewhat shamefaced and laughed strangely. "I guess I'm a trifle upset to-day. But I haven't slept well of late," he ended by way of explanation.

A peculiar look flitted across the face of the shyster.

"Are you ready to proceed with the agreement?" he asked, fetching his pencil from behind his ear and looking from one man to the other.

The judge and the prosecutor nodded. And after some further parley the details were arranged and an agreement drawn up by the terms of which Morrell, through his attorney, Hawk, agreed to reveal the whereabouts of Moxon in exchange for his freedom.

Hawk quickly signed his name. The prosecuting attorney, after carefully reading the agreement, also attached his signature. As he did so an unusually grim look came upon his face. After he had signed he shot a swift, piercing look at the shyster and the judge, but neither seemed to notice it.

The judge, after a moment's hesitation, also signed his name, thereby giving the law's sanction to the agreement.

The three had hardly executed the contract when a bailiff appeared at the door.

"Your honor," he announced, "the jury is ready to deliver its verdict."

Quickly the trio returned to the adjoining courtroom. The judge seated himself behind the bar, while the prosecuting attorney and Hawk took their positions in the lawyers' circle. A peculiar animation seemed to possess Bennett. His eyes shone brightly and he shuffled his papers. Once he rose from his chair and then sat down again. Hawk seemed very calm, and every now and then he shot a triumphant glance at the prosecutor.

The prisoner had been brought in from the pen. Hawk flashed the hardened rascal a grin as the officers seated him at his lawyer's side.

"What's it gonna be?" whispered the criminal.

Hawk bent close to his ear.

"I've already sprung you, so don't listen to what the twelve suckers say. They have a rapper for you, but I've put the crusher on it." And here he hastily whispered some instructions to his client. "Big Tim's" face

lit up with amusement. He nodded his head and then put his hand over his mouth to stifle a guffaw.

The clerk faced the jury.

"Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed upon a verdict?" he asked.

"We have," replied the foreman.

"And what is your verdict?"

"Guilty!"

A buzz of excitement came from the crowd.

The judge thanked the jury, dismissed it, and then turned to the shyster.

"Mr. Hawk, you may now proceed to carry out your part of the agreement, upon which I am to discharge the prisoner from further custody."

Rudolph Hawk stood up to face the judge. The prosecuting attorney looked piercingly at him, and the next moment his eyes swiftly swept the courtroom. His gaze for an instant met that of a policeman who stood some distance away. As he did so he pulled twice at the lobe of his ear. The policeman nodded and moved forward and whispered to another officer.

The shyster turned to the prisoner and spoke:

"Mr. Morrell, you've heard the jury pronounce a verdict of guilty against you. But this will be automatically voided as soon as you turn state's evidence and tell his honor and the prosecuting attorney of Moxon's whereabouts."

"Big Tim" rose.

"Waal, gents," he began, "I'm gonna make a confesh. I understand all I've got to do is tell where the killer is, and then I goes free?"

The judge nodded. The prosecutor leaned forward.

"Well, then, I'm gonna tell you where he is," continued Morrell.

He hesitated and looked about him with a grin.

The courtroom attendants stirred.

"Yes?" prompted the judge. "Where is he?"

"In this here room!"

The people on the benches were moved by a sudden dramatic impulse.

"Point him out," demanded the judge impatiently.

"I'm him!" exclaimed the prisoner, tapping his chest. "I'm Moxon, and I goes free!"

The judge straightened in astonishment.

The shyster, Hawk, nodded smilingly at his client. There was a moment of peculiar tension, and the judge was about to speak, when the prosecuting attorney leaped to his feet.

"I challenge that confession, and furthermore we agree to grant the prisoner immunity only if found guilty of robbery as charged in this particular case. It is absurd to think that this prisoner would be allowed to go free and escape a trial for murder on account of the legal technicality which states that no man can be forced to testify against himself, where his life or liberty is at stake. If in reality this prisoner is Moxon, then he is subject to arrest under the charge of murder. I repeat, I challenge his confession."

"On what ground?" asked the judge.

"On the ground that the confession is a falsehood," replied the prosecutor.

One could have heard a penny drop anywhere in the room. The judge was amazed. He could not understand it. Here was the prosecuting attorney assailing a confession which he had been instrumental in obtaining. What did the man mean?

By this time Hawk, who had been greatly taken aback by the attitude of his adversary, spoke up:

"This is irregular, your honor," he said, turning to the judge.

Then he confronted the prosecutor.

"Why do you brand the confession as false?" he demanded.

Every eye was centered upon the little group of men within the lawyers' circle, and every ear was strained. No one knew what the state's attorney was driving at, but he seemed like a man who knew what he was about, and every one seemed to sense it.

"Because it's a frame-up," replied Bennett.

The shyster's teeth snapped like a dog's.

"Between who?"

"Between you and the prisoner."

"Prove it!" cried the shyster.

"I will, and by unmasking the real criminal," retorted Bennett. And quickly he took a step forward toward Hawk, raising his hand as he did so.

The shyster grew pale as he recoiled a few paces.

"You're crazy!" he snarled, and with these words he shot his hand to his hip pocket. But the next instant two officers seized the man and forced him down into a chair.

The prosecuting attorney turned toward the judge.

"Your honor," he said, indicating the new prisoner, "this is the real murderer!"

Hawk glared balefully up at him.

"Prove what you say," he sneered.

Bennett smiled.

"Certainly," he said.

And as he spoke his hand shot out; he seized the shyster's hair and gave it a sharp jerk, causing a toupee to leave the prisoner's head, showing the top of his head totally bald!

And upon the top of his head was tattooed a flaming lizard, the mark that identified the bearer as the long-sought-for killer, Moxon.

"But how in the world did you know that the flaming lizard was tattooed on his bald head under the toupee?" asked the judge later on.

The prosecutor smiled.

"Do you remember when I made that startled exclamation just before he drew up the agreement?"

The judge nodded.

"Well, Hawk had just pushed his pencil behind his ear, and as he did so the point of it raised the edge of the toupee. I noticed the tail of the flaming lizard. Then I knew that in reality Hawk was the notorious murderer Moxon. Your honor, he was marked for the hangman."

REVENGE AFTER FOUR YEARS

J. FRANK NORFLEET of Hale Center, Tex., has at last got his man.

Fleeced out of $45,000 in Fort Worth, Tex., in November, 1919, for four years Norfleet has covered this country and others tracking down and causing the arrest of five alleged confidence men, finally arresting in Salt Lake City, Utah, the sixth and last fugitive who fleeced him.

"Caught my man in Salt Lake City," was the brief message to Charles Gunning, chief of police at Dallas, Tex., with whom Norfleet has conferred from time to time.

Norfleet has at times taken assumed names and traveled in disguise when nearing neighborhoods where he believed some of the quarry were hiding. He has been on the trail far into Mexico, in many parts of Canada, in every State in the United States save one, and in Cuba.

Of the original six who were accused of staging the fake stock game by which he was fleeced, the Hale County ranchman says that two are in the penitentiary, one was acquitted, one committed suicide, one died of illness, and the sixth is now in prison awaiting trial.

Identification in Salt Lake City, Utah, of M. P. Hunt, a Salt Lake City salesman, as W. B. Spencer of Texas, ended for J. Frank Norfleet, Texas ranchman, a four years' search for six men who fleeced him out of $45,000 in Fort Worth, Tex. Hunt is in jail on three Federal narcotic charges and the Government refuses to surrender him for trial in Texas on Norfleet's charge until after his trial there.

George Chase, superintendent of the Identification Bureau there, recognized Hunt as one of the sextette who victimized Norfleet after he had seen a picture sent out by the Texas rancher.

He informed Norfleet and the Texan arrived to nab his man.

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

2 "Zitana of Maison Rouge," by F. W. Doughty.
3 "The Mysterious Web," by Armstrong Perry.
4 "Under the Hypnotic Spell," by Dr. H. Enton.
5 "The Silken Sheath," by Crittenden Marriott.
6 "A Fortune Teller's Secret," by Gladys Hall.
7 "The Mystic Emblem," by Marie Coolidge Rask.
8 "The Cards of Fate," by William Goode.
9 "Mr. Bachellor's Apartments," by W. H. Osborne.
10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by C. F. Oursler.
13 "Under a Mask," By Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by C. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by R. Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29 "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith S. Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by B. Poynter
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieut. Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by Wm. H. Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Chas. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura R. Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by William H. Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by E. Rosemon
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathron.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by Wm. H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by C. F. Oursler.
64 "The Scheme of Solomon Snare," by W. Osborne.
65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
66 "The Clue of the Dark Room," by H. Craigie.
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73 "The Psychic Enemy," by Arthur Wm. Anderson
74 "The Wonder Girl," by Ralph Cummins.
75 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
76 "The Spirit Witness," by Chas. F. Oursler.
77 "The Little White Room," by Edmund Jones.
78 "The Stolen Year," by Edmund Elliot.
79 "The Affair at Hollywood House," by W. Kofoed.
80 "A Keyless Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie.
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82 "Who Killed McNally?" by Beulah Poynter.
83 "The Clue of the Whorl," by Katherine Stagg.
84 "The 'Czar' and the Ring," by Edmund Elliot.
85 "The Clue of Flame," by Jack Bechdolt.
86 "The Face in the Crowd," by Edmund Jones.
87 "The Man in Room No. 7," by Chas. F. Oursler.
88 "Four Ten-Dollar Bills," by Henry G. Howland.
89 "A Challenge to Power," by Dr. Harry Enton.
90 "The House Next-Door," by Captain Howard.
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92 "Friday at Twelve," by Katherine Stagg.
93 "By the Left Hand," by Hamilton Craigie.
94 "The Melody of Death," by Jack Bechdolt.
95 "The Trick of the Great Yen How," by William Hamilton Osborne.
96 "At Moriarity's," by Fred S. Shuey.
97 "The Lost Star of the Films," by Jack Bechdolt.
98 "Counterfeit Clues," by Chas. F. Oursler.
99 "The Cross," by W. S. Ingram.
100 "The Secret Service Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie and Elliot Balestier.
101 "A Crimson Price," by Elliott Lester.
102 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by G. Jacobs.
103 "A Museum Mystery," by Jack Bechdolt.
104 "The Little Red Book," by J. Alexander Young.
105 "A Man from Siam," by Chas. F. Oursler.
106 "The Clue of the Emerald Ring," by B. Poynter.
107 "Hell's Hinges," by Hamilton Craigie.
108 "The Wolf," by Katherine Stagg.
109 "The Brass Button," by Jack Bechdolt.
110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. F. Oursler.
111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by B. Poynter.
112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaski.
113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
120 "The Mouse Trap," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
121 "A Radio Mystery," by Capt. Jack Static
122 "The Clawing Death," by Beulah Poynter.
123 "A Master of Millions," by Chas. Fulton Oursler
124 "The Secret of Room 13," by Hamilton Craigie.
125 "Six Months to Live," by George Bronson-Howard.
126 "Seals of Wax," by Jack Bechdolt.
127 "When Crooks Conspire," by Harold F. Podhaski.
128 "The Mystery of the Blue Car," by H. Craigie.
129 "The Detective and the Law," by Frederick F. Shuey.
130 "The Hand in the Dark," by Chas. F. Oursler.
131 "The Trail of a Rogue," by George Bronson-Howard.
132 "The Woman from Nowhere," by Jack Bechdolt
133 "The Time Detective," by Frank Blighton.
134 "The Whispering-Room," by Frederick C. Davis.
135 "One Clue Missing," by Chas. F. Oursler.
136 "The Doom of the Damned," by Joe Burke.
137 "The Consuming Death," by Gilbert Hammond.
138 "Mrs. Deane's Jewels," by Beatrice S. Luisi.
139 "The Brass Voice," by Jack Bechdolt.
140 "For Shame," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
141 "The Triple Cross," by Hamilton Craigie.
142 "Blood Rubies," by J. Werner Phelps.
143 "I'll Win! I'll Win!" by Arthur B. Reeve and Margaret W. Reeve.
144 "Phantom Fingers," by George Bronson-Howard.
145 "On the Yellows," by Frank Blighton.

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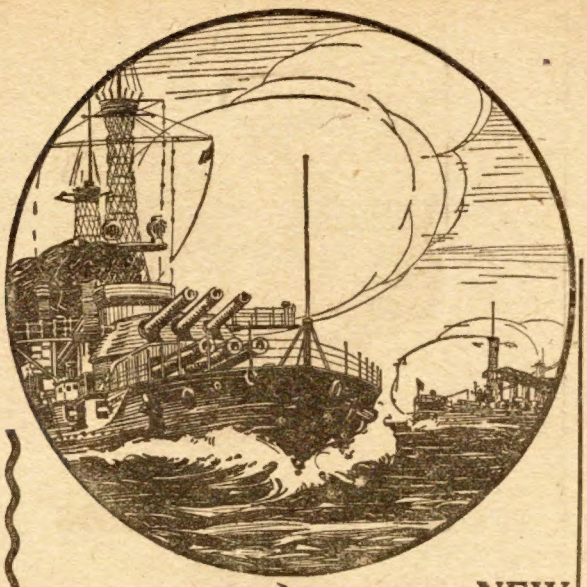

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